■ ENTERTAINMENT/A2-1
Pinoy Big Brother celebrity housemates desert pampered lives

■ BUSINESS/B1
Forex reserves hit all-time high of $20.5B

■ WORLD/A10
Protests over Prophet Muhammad caricature spread to Asia

■ NEWS/A2
Cory open to political alliance with Erap; says everthing so fluid today

High prices force Filipinos to scrimp on food, says poll

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

HIGH PRICES ARE ALTERING THE CONSUMING behavior of Filipinos so much that their overall spending on beverages and personal care items has shrunk, according to a survey by a British market research firm.

To survive, poor households are scrimping on food, soft drinks, cooking oil and snacks, and are

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PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

Wednesday, February 8, 2006 ▪▪ 2 sections / Vol. 21 / No. 62 P18 website: www.inq7.net

Ma'am GMA teaches kids English, geography

By Christine O. Avendaño

FOR CLOSE TO 40 MINUTES yesterday, President Macapagal-Arroyo played school teacher and story-teller to a class of Grade 1 pupils at a Mandaluyong

'Treated like animals'

INVESTIGATING task force chief Interior Undersecretary Marius Corpus wraps up his work begun Sunday and turns over his comprehensive and damning report to the justice department on Tuesday.

Probers cite what triggered stampede

By Norman Bordadora and Armand N. Mocon

TICKETS OFFERED BY SHOW ORGANIZERS TO a sleepless and hungry throng for a chance at a piece of heaven led instead to hellish death.

This, in a nutshell, was what Interior Undersecretary for Peace and Order Marius Corpus said of the circumstances behind the stampede on Saturday that marked what was to be the first anniversary celebration of ABS-CBN's daily noontime show "Wowowee."

"They were exploited, manipulated and treated like animals," Corpus said yesterday at a news conference called to present the findings of the inter-agency Task Force Ultra.

"Offering so few tickets to so many people can be likened to throwing a small slice of meat to a pack of hungry wolves. This triggered the stampede," he said.

Corpus, however, would neither name names nor say what criminal liability awaited those deemed responsible for the unnecessary chaos, the enormous crowd that had gathered, the stampede, and the way the crisis was handled.

Asked why he would not name names given the task force's fact-finding task, Corpus said at least three persons from among those involved in safety and secu-

TREATED/A19

Gov't could cancel ABS-CBN license

By Philip C. Tubeza

A POWERFUL STATE REGULATORY body yesterday said ABS-CBN could lose its authority to run one of the country's giant television networks but this would depend on the degree of its offense in the wake of last weekend's deadly stampede.

If the National Telecommunications Commission determines that the network was delinquent in providing enough measures to protect those who went to see its popular "Wowowee" game show, its "authority to operate" could be suspended or even revoked, NTC Chair Ronald Solis said.

The NTC is the sole body with responsibility to supervise and control all radio and television broadcasting stations and other telecommunications services throughout the country.

"We will find out if indeed there is administrative culpability on the part of the network," Solis said.

"The most severe penalty is revocation of authorization ... But it really depends on the gravity of the offense. We will have to weigh this carefully."

Solis denied the government was trying to lean hard on the Lopez-owned network giant, which has been critical of the Arroyo administration of late.

"People would always say that, but then, we've been holding its

GOVERNMENT/A17

THIS RENDEZVOUS in Cebu, Nov. 2, 2005, for Manny Pacquiao, his ex-girlfriend Jeanna Rose Bacosa and their alleged love child, born Jan. 2, 2004, turned out to be their last.

A woman 'scorned' takes swing at Pacman

By Gerry Lirio

IT WAS TRUE LOVE GONE wrong. Or so the woman accused said.

Until last year, Manny Pacquiao and his girlfriend of more than two years were two people blissfully enjoying stolen moments together.

Their relationship resulted in the birth of a healthy boy, according to Pacquiao's girlfriend, Jeanna Rose Bacosa, a 24-year-old native of Palawan.

Today, Bacosa is pursuing a complaint against Pacquiao for violation of Republic Act No. 9262, which protects women from violence, and to seek support for the boy.

The boxer stormed to get Pacquiao's side of the story, but calls to his cell phone went unanswered.

A WOMAN'S/A4

Gabby outraged by opinion of probe chief

A GRIM FACED EUSEBIO "Gabby" Lopez III yesterday claimed responsibility for the Saturday stampede that killed 74 people, but said he was "outraged" at the statement of the Task Force Ultra chair that the crowd seeking entry to the "Wowowee" anniversary show had been "treated like animals."

In a brief televised message, the chair and chief executive officer of ABS-CBN said the network would continue to work with the government. He said there would be "no whitewash," apparently addressing speculations that ABS-CBN could influence the outcome of the investigation ordered by President Macapagal-Arroyo.

This was the full text of Lopez's message:

"I am responsible and I will hold myself accountable should our justice system so determine in the future. There will be no whitewash. We will continue to work with the government and all its agencies.

"Having said that, we are outraged at the task force statement characterizing our program as one where we treated people like animals. Our record over the last 30 years speaks for itself. We have covered events—some [involving] over 100,000 [people]—over the years.

"While we acknowledge that we may possibly have had some shortcomings, a callous and malicious disregard for the people is not one of them."

On the eve of the stampede, ABS-CBN executives in charge of the daily noontime show decided to tell the crowd massed outside the Philippine Arena (formerly Ulto) in Bulig City that not everyone

GABBY/A15

P3.1-M GRANT

RP doc's proposal wins, benefits kids with Big C

By Christian V. Esguerra

GOOD NEWS FOR CHILDREN battling the cancer monster.

The Philippines has won a 58,808-euro grant from an international pharmaceutical company to jump-start a campaign against childhood cancers.

The winning proposal of Dr. Julius Lecciones of the Philippine Society of Pediatric Oncology (PSPO) will receive roughly P3.12 million from Sanofi-Aventis, the top drug company in Europe and the third largest in the world.

Lecciones' project, which outlines the creation and training of multidisciplinary teams to help combat cancers among children nationwide, bested at least six other local entries vying for the grant launched by Sanofi-Aventis and the International Union Against Cancer last year.

Lecciones' winning proposal involves two phases aimed at creating awareness about the serious problem of childhood cancer and mobilizing people to do something about it.

Some 3,500 Filipino children are diagnosed with cancer yearly, according to the 2005 Philippine Cancer Facts and Estimates.

The Philippines is among the 10 pilot countries in the massive campaign against the disease. The others are Bangladesh, Egypt, Honduras, Morocco, Senegal, Tanzania, Ukraine, Venezuela and Vietnam.

In a press conference in Quezon City yesterday, Lecciones said these countries were chosen probably because their cancer problems were "linked to poverty."

Of the 3,500 cancer cases diagnosed annually, between 40 and 60 percent involve acute lymphoblastic leukemia and retinoblastoma (eye cancer).

"Only two out of 10 patients survive while at least eight out of 10 are already in the advanced stage [when diagnosed]," Lec-

RP DOC'S/A6

HERO'S BURIAL
The United States honors Chief Warrant Officer Raul Garcia, a Filipino pilot killed in Iraq last month. US Embassy Charge d'Affaires Paul W. Jones presents the Stars and Stripes to Garcia's widow, Angela, at the funeral rites on Tuesday in Valenzuela City.

Fil-Am sex offender arrested in Las Piñas

By Arlyn dela Cruz
Contributor

A MAN OF FILIPINO DESCENT wanted in Guam for allegedly sodomizing two 9-year-old children in that US territory has been arrested by the Philippine police on a tip from US federal marshals.

The man, identified in US documents as "federal fugitive" Raymond Clark Domingues, was arrested on Monday at the BF International Subdivision in Las Piñas, police Supt. Eduardo Carlos said.

Carlos led the group of agents from the National Anti-Kidnapping Task Force (NAKTF) and the Philippine Commission for Transnational Crimes who carried out the arrest.

A team of US federal marshals from the District of Guam had been in Manila since Wednesday last week to help the Philippine police track down Domingues.

"He did not resist arrest," Carlos said.

Domingues was to have been deported to Guam last night but his departure was delayed pending the processing of his papers. He was expected to be flown out of the country today.

The US team headed by Deputy Jessie Curry coordinated with Carlos' office in pursuing Domingues's case.

US documents describe Domingues as of Filipino descent who was born in the United States and is also known as Raymond Pangasihan Domingues.

Quoting documents, police said Domingues fled Guam after two warrants of arrest were issued against him for two cases of sodomy, one in 2004 and another in 2005.

He was also being investigated in connection with other cases of child battery, according to the documents.

An information profile on Domingues from the US District Marshal in Guam described him as a "sexually violent predator."

The Regional Security Office of the US state department had cancelled Domingues's passport, making him an undocumented

FIL-AM/A5

A2
PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 8, 2006
Second FRONTPAGE

WEATHER FORECAST

Cory open to link-up with Erap

By Cynthia D. Balana

FORMER PRESIDENT CORAZON AQUINO YESterday left open the possibility of a political alliance with former President Joseph Estrada in efforts to end the current political crisis.

Speaking to reporters at the Cojuangco Building in Makati City, Aquino said there was "nothing political" in her "relationship" with Estrada even though she was seen and photographed with him and other opposition figures at a thanksgiving Mass Tuesday at the San Juan Medical Center for the detained President's successful eye operation.

"I'm not ruling out anything," she replied when asked if she could rule out a political alliance with Estrada. "I can't be categorical. Everything is in fluid today. What I can be more categorical on is that I'll be true to democracy and to the Filipino people."

Aquino stressed that she pursued and is seeking what during the Mass, which she attended in the company of Estrada, former President Fidel V. Ramos and Ramos' actress-turned-lawmaker daughter Ana Kristina Ramos-Martinez, among others,

5,000 RP Muslims join protest vs Danish cartoons

By Jeoffrey Maitem
Mindanao Bureau

COTABATO CITY—SOME 5,000 angry Muslims yesterday burned a Danish flag to protest the publication in Denmark of caricatures of the Prophet Mohammad.

The protesters, mainly religious students, gathered at the city square that was covered by 40 additional policemen, said Senior Supt. Abdulnar Mangudadatu, the city police chief.

The speakers said that the cartoons constituted blasphemy.

At one of the illustrations, which first appeared in the Danish newspaper Jyllands-Posten last September, the Prophet Mohammad was depicted with a lit bomb for a turban. (See related story in The World, Page A14.)

Photocopies of the illustrations were distributed during the protest.

Sammy Madura of the Consortium of Bangsamoro Civil Society said the illustrations were the handiwork of a person with a "satanic thought."

"This is an act of blasphemy, a sacrilege, as well as a transgression on Islam and therefore cannot be easily forgotten and forgiven by those who embrace Islam as a way of life and religion. This must be condemned in the highest form," Mindanao said.

Abdulmenaan Gayak, a Muslim cleric, said the illustrations were "mind-serving and a mind-conditioning (effort)."

"(There are also) mind-poisoning, (made) to convince the world to believe that Prophet Muhammad is just an ordinary mortal and a terrorist himself," he said.

"It's an abomination act because why should you associate a prophet as terrorists. Prophecy deals with religion while terrorism is a destroyer to mankind," Norodin Tiligan, a Muslim professional, said.

Napocor told to speed up oil spill cleanup

By Lolita B. Saberonia

THE PHILIPPINE COAST GUARD HAS asked the National Power Corporation to bring in more workers to clean up the bunker oil NPC spilled in Semirara, Antique.

In a meeting at the Marine Environmental Protection Command office in Manila Friday, PCG officials reminded Napocor representatives that there should be 400 workers in the cleanup, according to PCG spokesperson Lt. Commander Joseph Coyme.

On Dec. 18, a Napocor barge ran aground off Siete Bailey, Semirara, Antique, spilling between 200,000 and 350,000 liters of bunker fuel.

About 258 workers are removing the oil spill from the affected areas, which include 236 hectares of mangroves.

Coyme, who was present at the meeting, said Napocor officials had voiced problems about disbursing money from their insurance company.

"We understand their predicament, but our concern is removing the oil as fast as possible and its effects on the environment, especially the mangroves," Coyme said.

He added that less than 10 percent of the affected area had been cleaned up.

No plea from Dinky

By DJ Yap

FORMER SOCIAL Welfare Secretary Corazon "Dinky" Soliman yesterday refused to enter a plea in the P20-million libel case filed against her by Abigail Pangilinan Paz. Soliman's lawyers moved to have the charge dismissed instead.

Their public prosecutor then entered a "not guilty" plea in her behalf, under objections from Soliman, who asked the court to act on her motion to dismiss before her arraignment.

Judge Rosanna Ines Maglaya of Quezon City Regional Trial Court Branch 88, however, ruled that Soliman must be arraigned first before she would act on the motion.

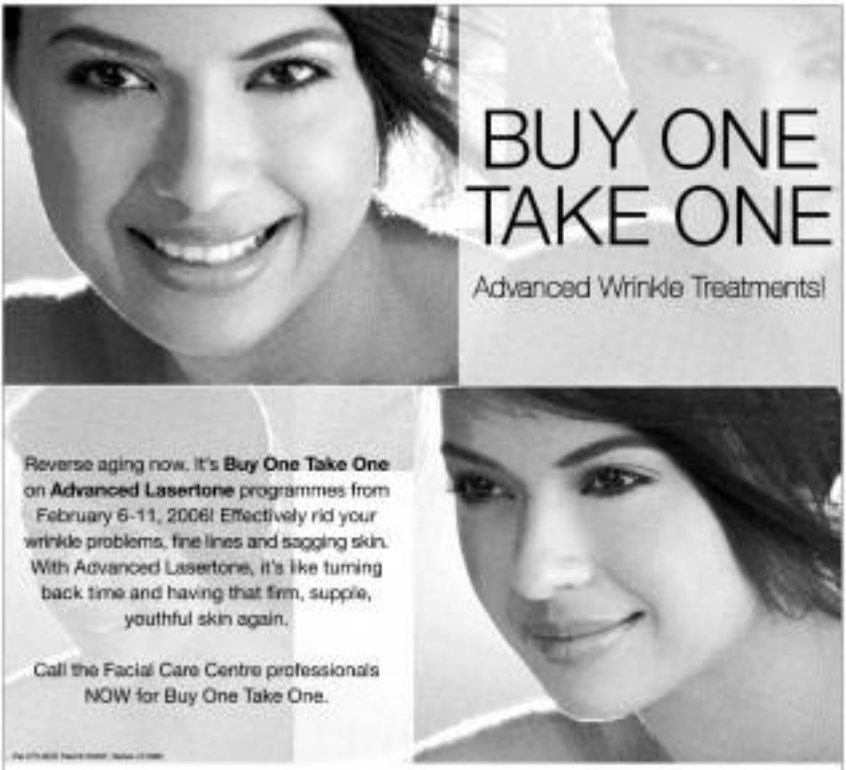
The former Cabinet member who split with President Macapagal-Arroyo over allegations the latter had cheated in the 2004 elections said the libel case was "frivolous."

In her motion, Soliman said the allegations in the charge sheet did not constitute an offense, among other grounds.

Maglaya gave the public prosecutor 10 days to respond to the motion.

Soliman, who was joined in the hearing by friends and supporters including "running priest" Fr. Robert Reyes, also filed a motion to travel abroad for an Asian leaders conference in Cambodia on Feb. 7-10, which the court granted.

Mercedes filed the P20-million libel suit last year, accusing Soliman of maintaining that his endorsement of the impeachment complaint filed by lawyer Oliver Lozano in the House of Representatives against the Ombudsman had the "blessings of the Arroyo family."



High prices force Filipinos to scrimp on food, says poll

From page A1

dropping mineral water and deodorant, results cycle 2005 TNS Metakpanel survey showed.

The survey found that Filipino households increased their spending last year, except for Class E (families living on an income of P5,500 a month).

While overall spending grew by an average of 10 percent for all households, Class E spending plunged 8.9 percent from 24 weeks ending last June 10 to 24 weeks ending last Dec. 4, according to the survey.

Although all other socioeconomic groups were increasing or maintaining their weekly spending, only Class E taipans was declining to an average of P329 per week compared with the Philippine average of P482," said Andrea Sarah, Metakpanel TNS commercial director.

Spending by Class D families with a monthly income of between P5,500 and P20,000) grew by a measly 0.1 percent.

In contrast, Class A and B households (with a monthly income of more than P40,000) jacked up their spending by 4.2 percent during the period. But the increase was lower than the 7.6-percent inflation rate last year.

Class C spending rose

The biggest jump was registered by Class C households (with a monthly income of between P20,000 and P40,000) whose spending went up 27 percent.

Comparing 24 weeks ending June 10 with 24 weeks ending Dec. 4, consumer spending on food, beverage, personal care and household products grew 2 percent, well below the inflation rate. Key declines in spending were from personal care products (-1.4 percent) and beverages (-7.7 percent).

Class E households live in slums in temporary one-room structures with no furnishings. Members of this class are usually elementary school graduates and work as manual laborers if they are not jobless.

They represent one out of every three Filipinos but they account for only a fifth of the total spending for food, personal care, household products and beverages by all households in the country.

Hardest hit

Among the key items bought by the poorest of the poor, the beverage sector took the hardest hit as families belonging to Class E spent 13.6 percent less for soft drinks and juices and fifty shrinking items of toilet, according to Sarah.

Sarah said the Class E families were also dropping personal care "luxury items" such as deodorants, colognes and baby diapers.

Sarah observed that while these households continued to buy cleaning fan soaps, they were scrimping their "fun-care items" because they sell in "tingi" or small packages and are "luxuries" or nice cards, Sarah said.

To cope with rising prices, Class E households scrimp on nonessential items such as snacks, spreads and sauces, and even everyday items such as shaving gel and milk powder.

"Cooking oil consumers are trading down to cheaper unbranded products resulting in a 6-percent price drop. Class E households are also using less of the product and is recycled or reworked for longer periods of time," Sarah said.

She noted that the only everyday item that has not suffered from the pass-pinching households were powder laundry detergent.

"The strong functions of fabric conditioners and fun scrubbing or close cooking sauces mean that prices and volumes can be maintained even as we enter the low-environment times," Arora said.

The TNS Metakpanel survey bolsters other recent polls that showed the rise of poverty in the country.

Hunger

Social Weather Stations reported that the proportion of Filipino households experiencing hunger rose to 16.7 percent in the fourth quarter of 2007, a new record high since 1998. Hunger peaked during surveys on hunger in mid-1998.

"It has now been in double digits for seven consecutive quarters," SWS said.

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A woman 'scorned' . . .

From page A1

Dubbed the "Pinoy Cinderella Man," Barquias came home in a luxury van, some two weeks ago after an emotional fight against three-time world champion Erik Morales of Mexico.

From a poor "jamaleon" (bakery worker ... a bakery worker...Ito, quite is now a multimillionaire and an inspiration to Filipinos dreaming of the good life.

Father's name

In an interview with the Inquirer, Barcena said the child was born on Jan. 2, 2006, baptized in a Quezon City church and given Mercedes Joanne as the dearest Church and legal documents as well as their choice during happier times to bolster her claim.

The 3-year-old child romped in the room in a building on Tomas Morato Avenue in Quezon City where the interview was held.

He is a jolly, fair-complexioned boy his fine visibly firm and big. When shown a picture of Barquias, he shouted in glee: "Manny! Manny!"

Where it all began

Her child, Barcena said, was a product of two people in love that began at the billiard hall and videoke bar of Pan Pacific Hotel in Binondo, Manila. Barquias was the billiard center's frequent guest and player. She was to billiard "partner" and waitress.

Barcena and Barquias first met there in February 2005.

Initially, the Palawan lass didn't know he was Barquias, the boxing star. She had no interest in sports, she said. He was there almost every night, but what she noticed was that Barquias was calling her by her first name. The other male customers were simply calling her "Miss."

He was sweet

"He was so nice and sweet. And he was paying me more attention than the rest," Barcena recalled.

Barquias first invited her out on a date in April 2005. She was about to wrap up her day's work at 5 a.m. "Because I had grown fond of him, I didn't think twice in joining him."

They drove to a hotel in Pasay City she said. In no time, Barquias and Joanne took a room and stayed there for hours. Before leaving, Barquias tried to give her money, but she turned it down, telling him she was not a sex worker.

She was with him because she sensed he love with him, Barcena said. She was fully aware, she said, that he was a married man and had two kids by his legal wife.

And came often ...

After the first date, Barquias went to the billiard hall more often, and was careless to her than he had ever been.

They went out and checked in at the same hotel two more times, each time longer than the first.

On both occasions, Barquias offered her money each, but Barcena said she turned it down for the same reason: She was with him because of love, not money.

Barquias once called her, saying he couldn't see her because he was out of town preparing for a big fight. She was a little bit depressed, she said. It was during the Christmas holidays. Less than an hour, he showed up at the billiard hall, saying he only wanted to pull a surprise.

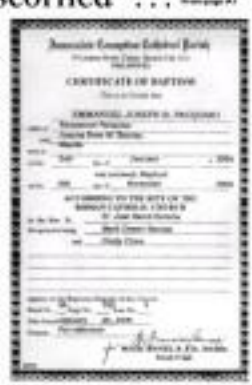
In May 2005, Barcena learned she was pregnant. When she broke the news to him, Barquias appeared jubilant. It was as if he were a first-time father, she said.

He later asked her to stop working and to move to another apartment to keep away from mortgage. She agreed.

In November 2005, he gave her P350,000 as a Christmas gift. This time, she accepted it because she needed to pay her hospitals bills. In January 2006, she gave birth to the boy.

Happy at news of a boy

Told of his son, Barquias seemed happy. He saw the boy three weeks later. But soon, the calls came few and far between.



PROOF presented to the Inquirer of the existence of a child sired by the People's Champ Barcena: certificate issued by the Immaculate Conception Cathedral Parish in Cubao, Quezon City

In November 2007, Joanne said she got a call from Barquias asking her to see him in Cebu. Mother and sister tickets were provided. He picked them up at the Mactan Cebu.

There, at a Cebu hotel, father and son met again after so many months. He was visibly pleased that he allowed someone to take their pictures together.

After the meeting, Barquias gave Barcena P5,000 for her fare. Little did she know that it was to be the last time she would see him.

She kept on calling him. She sent him text messages, pleading for support for the boy. "I will surprise you," she was told. But until she met with lawyer Victor Rodriguez last week, she said, no surprises came.

They were in a hotel in Pasay City with Barquias' aide, Jimbee, and some of his friends who tried to prevent her from seeking legal counsel.

Now a wayward track

On Jan. 31, she was surprised to get a call from Barquias himself. But it was no longer the man she knew, she said.

Shouting, he reportedly told her: "What are you doing?" She replied: "Why, what am I doing?"

But Barquias had the countenance of a wayward husband.

"If you have a problem, why don't you just talk it out?" Barquias yelled at her. "Why do you have to talk to somebody else? What do you want? Financial support? I have helped other people, why do you think I shouldn't help you. To avoid scandal, I gave them (my kids) part of their wealth for evidence? Tell your lawyer to shut up or I will sue his mouth."

Barcena said she had become so afraid of Barquias that she didn't want anyone to know where she was staying now.

She said she was only aware that she might be accused of simply wanting to milk Barquias now that he is a multimillionaire.

Love is lost

Under the Family Code, she said, if a woman cohabits with a married man, the boy can only use it when he turns 21.

To those who criticized her, Barcena said she would like to say that telling one's sad story was not an easy thing to do. She is telling hers now, she said, to illustrate that it was love that took place between them.

"I loved him then. Today, I love him not," she said.

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DOJ lets Regine off taxman's hook

By Armand M. Nocum

INNER TECHNICALITY

This was how songbird Regine Velasquez avoided becoming a jailbird in the multi-million tax evasion case the BIR filed against her last year.

In a nine-page decision released to the media yesterday, Department of Justice (DOJ) prosecutors said the failure of the Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR) to send notice to Velasquez before filing the case in April effectively cheated her of the right to due process.

"In sum, complainant's (BIR) allegation that respondent (Velasquez) willfully attempted to evade or defeat payment of tax and/or failure to supply correct and accurate information has no basis ... Thus, recommending the dismissal of the present complaint," the DOJ said.

In a decision penned by state prosecutor Senen Dapalla-Balisong and assistant chief state prosecutor Miguel Gudio, the DOJ said the "failure to [the] taxpayer-name can lead to legal confusion."

The prosecutors stressed that any shortcut in the legal procedure "cannot be countenanced."

"So it stated that the notice and demand are requirements of due process to which every taxpayer is entitled," the DOJ said of the need for the BIR to notify the respondent of her tax liabilities to give her a chance to explain and submit evidence in her favor prior to filing of the case.

In its complaint, the BIR said Velasquez did not pay taxes from her earnings as product endorser of Nestlé-Philippines, among others in 2003.

Velasquez is also the endorser of the Department of Tourism and Smart Communications' tourism promotion program, BPC, Mercury's, Digital, Sun, Smart and Nokia.

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Chairman

Abdominal fat cells linked to diabetes

MEDICAL EXPERTS ARE NOW ZEROING in on the fat cells as a major culprit in the development of diabetes and heart disease.

According to Dr. Mary Ann Gan-Abraham, president of the Philippine Lipid Society, most Type 2 diabetic (T2DM) patients are overweight or obese and have an excess fat in the abdomen. They have excesses fat deposits in muscle, liver and intra-abdominal fats, and have large abnormally-functioning fat cells or adipocytes whose capacity to store triglycerides and other types of fats from the diet is compromised.

This will be the subject of Abraham's plenary lecture during the three-day 11th joint annual convention of the Philippine Society of Hypertension and Philippine Lipid Society at the Cebu Shangri-La Hotel starting today.

Abraham will present latest scientific data indicating that intra-abdominal or visceral fat could be the underlying basis for diabetes, cholesterol problems and cardiovascular disease.

More than 1,500 doctors nationwide are expected to attend the joint PSH-PLS convention which will present clinical updates in the treatment of hypertension, cholesterol problems, diabetes and cardiovascular diseases in general.

CHIEF JUSTICE Artemio Panganiban (right) with Court of Appeals Presiding Justice Ruben Reyes. (DAI)

Chief justice rebukes CA chief on car

By Armand N. Nocum

CHIEF JUSTICE ARTEMIO PANGANIBAN has taken Court of Appeals Presiding Justice Ruben T. Reyes to task for polishing his image at the expense of the highest magistracy of the land and his fellow appellate justices.

The rebuke came in the form of a letter Panganiban wrote Reyes after the Inquirer ran an article last Sunday quoting the appellate judge as saying he had decided to forego buying a new car to save money for employees bound to retire after the Chief Justice had tried to prevail on him to replace his five-year-old car with one befitting his high position.

"It's not for you, but for the dignity of the office," Reyes quoted Panganiban as having told him.

"You know that the statements attributed to you in the foregoing report are false," Panganiban said in his Feb. 6 letter to Reyes. "It was you who asked me to provide you a new car."

The Chief Justice demanded that Reyes, who was promoted to head the Court of Appeals last December, apologize immediately to his colleagues and "make the proper correction in the PDI report."

'False statement'

"The false statements attributed to you have caused undue public embarrassment and ridicule to the Chief Justice and possibly to your colleagues in the Court of Appeals," Panganiban said.

In an earlier interview, Reyes said that instead of using a P2.5-million allotment to buy a Toyota Camry and a Starex van for his office, he decided to put the money into a fund to provide court employees with "a huge benefit" or emergency-economic assistance.

In a letter to the Inquirer, Reyes said that Panganiban did not ask him to trade in his car for a more expensive model.

"What he told me was I can buy a new one but if I do so, there would not be enough savings left from the CA budget to cover fully the economic assistance given to our employees," Reyes wrote. "Thus, I withdrew the earlier request for the purchase of a vehicle to give priority to the grant of emergency economic assistance to court officials and employees," under the initiative of the new Chief Justice."

In his letter, Panganiban reminded Reyes it was the latter who had written the Chief Justice last Jan. 9 asking whether he could "realign the savings of the Court of Appeals to enable [him] to buy a new car."

Panganiban wrote he recalled telling Reyes that 28,000 judiciary employees nationwide were to be given emergency economic assistance in cash to be taken from the "savings of the various courts."

He said that if Reyes pursued his plans to get a new car, the money would have been taken from the CA's savings and there would not be enough left to cover fully the emergency assistance to CA employees.

Rebs ambush pursuing troops

COMMUNIST GUERRILLAS AMBUSHED A multitude of army troops taking part in a manhunt for rebels who briefly held a town mayor, sparking a clash that killed one rebel and wounded five soldiers, a military official said yesterday.

An undetermined number of New People's Army guerrillas opened fire on the Army truck Monday near Lingig town in Surigao del Sur, said Lt. Col. Francisco Gonzalino, spokesman for the Army's 4th Infantry Division.

The Army troops were on route to reinforce soldiers hunting a group of guerrillas who briefly held Lingig Mayor Jimmy Luna on Sunday to gain entry to the town's police station, where they seized a cache of assault rifles and grenades, Gonzalino said.

After the raid, the rebels, dressed in Army uniforms, fled toward the hinterland in Surigao del Sur aboard a number of vehicles, including one taken from Luna, police said.

The rebels had disarmed Luna's bodyguards but did not harm them or the policemen at the station, officials said.

National police chief Arturo Lomibao ordered the provincial police chief and the town police force of Lingig, which was about a dozen officers, for failing to put up an adequate defense against rebel attacks, police spokesman Leopoldo Almosal said. AP

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER 20
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Ma'am GMA teaches kids English, geography

From page A1

City public school.

Ms Arroyo asked the students at the Andres Bonifacio Integrated School to speak in English. Nagkilala, sa ilan read an essay about how a boy dreamed of riding a magic sun and going to equally magical places.

Before reading "Magic Mat," she peppered the 7-year-olds with questions about geography and their comprehension of the English language.

Holding a script, Ms Arroyo made sure that she had props to make her points clear.

She first asked for a world map and settled lastably for a globe that her aides were able to produce.

Asia's biggest

Using the globe and later a world map, the President asked the children to mark with yellow "post it" notes countries that belonged either to the East or the West...a task the children did not find too difficult.

The children responded enthusiastically when she asked them what the "biggest piece of land" in the world was.

One shot back with the answer "China," but the President said it was "Asia," pointing to the globe.

Ms Arroyo, who sometimes had to put on her eyeglasses, repeatedly said "excellent" and "great" when the children gave the right answers.

Asleep

She went to the blackboard and wrote down some words such as "dreams" and "subop," and then asked the children which of the words were answers to her questions.

After this exercise, Ms Arroyo proceeded to read the book purchased by Virgilio Almario about how a boy named Fidel dreamed one night of riding a magic mat.

Through the magic mat, she related to the children how Fidel was able to travel to magical places in the East and the West.

Heaven

After the story, she asked questions to find out whether the children had understood the story.

PUPILS' PET: Grade 1 students of the Andres Bonifacio Integrated School in Mandaluyong City are treated to story-telling by President Arroyo who, through the Dept. of Health's program of Bright Minds Read, encourages reading. She is also promoting English as the medium of instruction. (JOHN BALDOZA)

"He was the man really magical?" the President asked.

"Yes," said the boy named Hasmin, who had been giving most of the right answers to her questions.

"Because it's all dream," he said, prompting the President to say "very good, Hasmin."

Thanking the children for their time, Ms Arroyo said she wanted to underscore the "importance of having instructional materials" in enhancing schoolchildren.

She also announced that the Department of Budget and Management would release P500 million for textbooks and instructional materials. "These materials are needed so that it would be easier to teach students," she said.

Accompanying Ms Arroyo were her chief of staff Michael Defensor, Mandaluyong City Mayor Neptali Gonzales II and Mandaluyong Rep. Benjamin Abalos Jr.

Defensor said the P500 million was part of the P1.89 billion that the Department of Education had allotted in its budget for this year for textbooks and instructional materials.

Miss coaching?

Defensor said Ms Arroyo was supposed to stay only long enough to read the children's story but she told him she wanted to help them converse with the children were to the English language.

The claim that Ms Arroyo spent time with was made up of 52 children, 44 of whom were scholars of Dreyse Corp.

"The President really took her time," Defensor said in a phone interview. "Maybe she missed teaching."

Ms Arroyo once taught economics at Ateneo de Manila University.

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A Development Communication Service: DEPARTMENT OF FINANCE PHILIPPINE INFORMATION AGENCY

RP doc's proposal wins, benefits kids . . .

From page A1

viruses said.

"It's important to diagnose [the disease] at the earliest stage," Dr. Victoria Abanera, PHPO president, said at the press conference. "If not, treatment would be more difficult, costly and with attendant complications."

1st, 2nd stages

The first stage involves the creation of multidisciplinary teams that will manage cases in their respective areas. The team includes an oncologist, pediatric surgeon, pathologist and nurses.

Even with only 28 members, the PHPO is fairly present in major areas in the country. They are deployed in northern Luzon (Ilo Province, La Union, Cagayan Valley), Central Luzon (Angeles City, Bataan, Pampanga), Metro Manila, southern Luzon, Eastern and Western Visayas, and Davao.

In the second stage, "front-line" doctors will be trained in the early detection of cancer among children.

"Sometimes, a child is anemic and the doctor would think it's just iron deficiency not knowing that it's already an early sign of leukemia," Lecaroz said. "Sometimes, a child keeps bumping into things because he can't see properly, it may be a sign of retinoblastoma."

A parents group, "Project Share Kids," will help disseminate information about childhood cancers while generating support among parents and communities.

Fil-Am sex offender . . .

From page A1

alien in the Philippines.

An intelligence build-up on Dominguez's activities in the Philippines was initially undertaken by agents of the National Bureau of Investigation, who in turn forwarded the information to the state department.

Naboal and FCIU agents had been tailing Dominguez since 9 p.m. on Sunday before arresting him on Monday morning, Carlos said.

Corrections

IN THE JAN. 31 ISSUE, Nestor Tarce's column, Viewfinder, in the Entertainment section on Page A2-3—"Temptation of Wonall films coming up"—erroneously stated that in the movie "Proof," the world of the lead character played by Gwyneth Paltrow was "turned upside down with the arrival of her sister [Chain Dreed]." Claire is the name of the lead character's sister, a role played by Hope Davis—not Chain Dreed.

* * *

IN LATER EDITIONS of the Feb. 5 issue, A front-page story—"Monsanto: Bioengineered rice, hope for the poor"—misspelled the name of the head of ABS-CBN Foundation. The correct name of the foundation's head is Tina Monzon—not Monson—Palma.

* * *

Readers may send their requests for corrections of factual errors in articles in the Sun, Philippine Daily Inquirer 5th building, Chino Roces Avenue corner Alejandrino Street, Makati City, fax No. 897-43-93/897-9-967, e-mail address: inquirer@inquirer.com.ph.

Complaints about lack of fairness in articles may also be sent to Letizia Reyes-Tirol (editor) editorial, e-mail address: tirol@inquirer.com.ph or fax No. 897-43-93/894-1066. Inky Ramos Alcantara (the phone number is 897-2000 local 3443).

PCGG chief dares 4 senators to debate, but not in Senate

By Alexis Pope

AN UNREPENTANT CAMILO SABIO, THE chair of the Presidential Commission on Good Government, renewed his word war with four senators yesterday, challenging them to a debate on the issue of whether PCGG commissioners were using the various coco levy–fund companies as a "talking core."

But Sabio said he would not debate Senators Johnny Ancion, Miguardo Seguia, Juan Ponce Enrile and Senate President Franklin Drilon on the Senate floor unless the rules are softened.

"I want something I believe I can actually be under the Constitution and the law. I don't want to be equal. We can have a civilized and friendly debate. They could speak from the Senate. I will speak from the room in the PCGG," Sabio told a press conference yesterday.

Based on SC rulings

He said the debate should be based on Supreme Court decisions, not "political statements that don't have any basis."

The new PCGG chief became the target of the four senators' ire when he refused to answer questions concerning details about a report of commission chair with Commissioner Edmundo Cabangbang on the P130-billion sequestered shares in San Miguel Corp.

For his defiance, the Senate finance committee under Enrile slashed the proposed PCGG budget for 2006 from P67 million to P1.

Sabio rejects accusation by President Arroyo's Executive Order No. 1 barring any PCGG official from testifying in a legislative inquiry.

He also argued that Drilon, Enrile and Ingara were defendants in some coco levy fund cases and answering their questions would prejudice the PCGG's stance in go after ill-gotten wealth.

In yesterday's press conference, Sabio chose to focus on the issue of "conflict of interest" that the PCGG was telemarketing the companies it had sequestered and that these were being used by agency officials for personal gain.

He said he and the senators should debate on whether there was a conflict of interest and whether there was corruption in the coco levy fund companies, such as the Common Industry Investment Fund.

He also took offense at the insinuation that he was taking advantage of his position to accumulate wealth.

"Although I have accepted major securities positions in government... just one get on my house and even the stairs have many holes. My wife is afraid my grandchildren might fall into those holes.

"Until now I do not own a house. It appears to some people that we are swallowing to wealth. People think we are corrupt. That is damaging to my office, to the seat of power, the Presidency. It is not correct to say that there is a conflict of interest. The President knows I am honest. I am not a saint like a lot of people, but I am not involved in corruption," he said.

He pointed out that instead of establishing

SABIO

a lucrative law practice like some senators, he lamented for farmers for a pittance.

"I worked with the farmers, with the federation of Free Farmers, as a volunteer being paid per appearance for P5, P10 or even just fruits and vegetables," Sabio said.

He said he held positions in three coco levy companies—the United Coconut Planters Bank, the CIIF Oil Mills Group and Coconut Investment, and receives just one director's fee from each.

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The WORLD

Cesar Lawrence B. Gosco

Protests over cartoons spread to Asia

JAKARTA—DANISH CITIZENS WERE ADVISED to leave Indonesia on Tuesday as angry protests over the publication of caricatures of the Prophet Muhammad spread across Asia, with some rioters clashing with police.

Thousands took to the streets in Pakistan, some shouting "Hang the man who insulted the prophet," and hundreds of Muslims turned out in the predominantly Christian Philippines.

In the second straight day of violence in Afghanistan, stones clashed with police and Nato peacekeepers during demonstrations against the publication of cartoons in mostly Western papers.

Norwegian troops used tear gas to disperse stone-throwing protesters outside their base in Meymana, a city in the northwest, said Agustinus Leader Jenie Silvano Soetrot, a spokesperson for the international Security Assistance Force.

Elsewhere in the region, Australians were warned by their governments to use caution if traveling the Middle East and New Zealand's prime minister said the cartoons had "put our people offshore at risk." Items media in both countries have published the images.

Muslim anger at the publication of the cartoons has been directed at Denmark, where they were first printed in a newspaper in September. Danish ministers have been attacked and boycotts of Danish products launched in many Muslim countries. The cartoons have since been reprinted by media outlets in other European countries, the United States and elsewhere.

Malaysia's prime minister slammed the foreign media and a head cleric on Tuesday for running the drawings, one of which shows Muhammad wearing a turban shaped as a bomb. Another portrays him holding a sword, his eyes covered by a black rectangle.

Danish citizens in Indonesia were advised to leave the world's most populous Muslim nation, where rock-throwing demonstrators have attacked the country's diplomatic missions on a near daily basis.

Rallies were held in at least four cities across the sprawling country on Tuesday.

"The Foreign Ministry recommends that Danes already in Indonesia leave and that those interested in coming postpone their plans," said Niels Erik Anderson, the country's ambassador to Indonesia.

More than 3,000 people rallied in Pakistan and hundreds of Muslims in the southern Philippines burned a Danish flag.

Australian Foreign Minister Alexander Downer said his government had temporarily closed diplomatic missions in Indonesian provinces—where it shares a building with the Danish mission.

He warned his citizens to be wary if traveling to the Middle East.

Japan expressed concern about mounting violence over the Muhammad caricatures and urged protesters not to harbor inflame emotions.

"We urge all parties to exert restraint and refrain from unnecessary or actions that could aggravate the situation," the Foreign Ministry said in a statement. AP

Anger boils over Egyptian ferry tragedy

DAMIETTA, EGYPT—A MOB OF EGYPTIANS stormed Monday the offices of the owners of a ferry that sank in the Nile Eva as anger over the fate of relatives missing after one of the worst maritime disasters in living memory boiled over into violence.

Hopes of finding more survivors were fading fast four days after the 76-year-old ferry sank on a crossing from Saudi Arabia on Friday, amid growing controversy over the safety of the vessel, the actions of the crew and the slow start to the rescue operation.

According to the company that owned the doomed Al-Salam Boccaccio 98, 426 people have been pulled from the sea, leaving close to 1,000 dead or missing.

"Finally we've had good news, another 37 were found last night at 11 p.m. (21:00 GMT)," said Khaled Bekhit, head of operations at the Al-Salam Maritime Transport Company. "We should not lose all hope, the waters are not so cold." But doctors said they did not expect many more survivors to be found.

In Safaga, the doomed ship's destination in southeastern Egypt, an angry mob went on the rampage, ransacking Al-Salam offices and clashing with police, infuriated by the lack of information over the fate of their relatives.

Survivors and relatives have blamed Al-Salam for using a ship that did not comply with safety standards and accused the crew of ignoring a "Mayday" that broke out on board when there was still time to turn back to Saudi Arabia. Questions are also being asked in the Egyptian press and parliament about why the rescue and search operations started only seven hours after the ship sank.

The protesters ransacked the Safaga offices of a tour operator selling ferry tickets and broke into the offices of the shipping company in an adjacent building.

"Now they throw everything they could find out the window and set fire to the place," witness Mostafa Mohamed told AFP.

Several survivors have accused the ship's captain Omar Saeed of refusing to acknowledge the SOS passed by the five and charged that the two hours during the blaze raged would have given the ship enough time to evacuate its dozens.

Egyptian press reports alleged that one of the company's other ships was underused that the Al-Salam had environmental difficulties but did not respond.

But the ship's owners defended the record of the vessel and its crew, saying they met all international standards.

Official sources said 190 bodies have been recovered so far. An AFP reporter in the resort of Hurghada, further north, said vans broke out at the hospital between families claiming the same bodies, often bloated beyond recognition.

"It's normal there would be disputes about the identity because after some time in the sea, it's like the face has come off," a hospital official said.

He said the unidentified and disputed bodies were being sent to the central morgue in Cairo for DNA testing.

Police at Safaga's main morgue in Hurghada hospital held up photographs of the dead as families read out the names of identified bodies then families can take away the burial. AFP

WorldBriefs

Bush seeks $2.7-trillion budget

WASHINGTON—President George W. Bush proposed on Monday to boost defense spending, slow Medicare's growth and cut a host of domestic programs in a $2.77 billion budget that sought to soothe Republican frustrations over high deficits if president Republican Sen. Arlen Specter of Pennsylvania, said Bush's proposed funding cuts for health and education were "scandalous." "Specter chairs a Senate panel that oversees spending on such programs. The Republican senator said discretionary programs outside national security by U.S. servers. Bush wants to contribute or scrap 141 programs, with education, cancer research and community-policing programs called by Nancy M. But Bush proposed to spend $439.3 billion defense spending, up 4.8 percent from last year. The top of that, the White House will seek new financing for wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Reuters

Harper sworn in as Canada's new PM

OTTAWA—Conservative leader Stephen Harper was sworn in as Canada's 22nd prime minister Monday, vowing to shore up government accountability following corruption scandals that marred the term of his more liberal predecessor. Harper, one of Canada's youngest prime ministers at 46, and his ministers arrived for the ceremony in a Dodge Caravan instead of the usual limousines as part of an effort to show they are close to public concerns. With his wife, two young children, two brothers, mother and friends in attendance, Harper swore his oath of office to Governor General Michaelle Jean in front of cabinet, before setting out his plans. He takes over from Paul Martin. Harper promised to lower consumption taxes, legislation to curb gun violence in major cities and better childcare and healthcare. AFP

13 dead in Afghan bomb blast

KANDAHAR, Afghanistan—A powerful bomb exploded outside the police headquarters in the southern Afghan city of Kandahar on Tuesday, killing 13 people and wounding 11 others, a doctor said. The interior ministry confirmed the blast was caused by a bomb. A dead eyed motorbike was at the scene of the blast, which was splattered in blood, an AFP correspondent said. "Almost everyone, most of them police, have died or been injured in Kandahar City and were taken to the Kandahar public health hospital," a doctor on duty who gave his name as Mansoor, told AFP. "Eleven are wounded, most of them in critical condition," he said. AFP

Japanese princess pregnant

TOKYO—Japan's Princess Kiko, the wife of the emperor's second eldest son, is pregnant, national broadcaster NHK reported Tuesday, raising the possibility that the country's royal family could produce its first male heir in 40 years. The Imperial Household Agency refused to immediately comment, but the report triggered a round of applause by lawmakers at a relevant parliamentary committee meeting attended by Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi. Kiko, the wife of Prince Akishino, has two daughters. Crown Prince Naruhito, the eldest son of Emperor Akihito, has had a lone daughter with his wife, Crown Princess Masako. AP

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OPINION

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Continuing payback

MICHAEL DEFENSOR'S APPOINTMENT AS THE President's chief of staff was just the first in a series of presidential Cabinet appointments. Over the past few days, Malacañang has disclosed appointments that had been methodically leaked to the media beforehand, probably to gauge the public's reaction to them. Among the new appointees are two members of the House of Representatives: Ronaldo Puno as secretary of interior and local government and Rolando Andaya as secretary of budget and management. A former Senate congressman, Eduardo Ermita, has been made chief presidential legal adviser. And former Secretary Angelo Reyes is being sent to the Department of Environment and Natural Resources while Budget Secretary Romulo Neri returns to the National Economic and Development Authority.

Editorial

Almost immediately, the public and media reaction was, to put it mildly, underwhelming. Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita sheepishly responded to public skepticism by remarking, "Nobody's perfect. The President is not King Solomon but she is trying to be Solomon. There will always be questions, but let's see how they perform first."

What can be made of these appointments? King Solomon, to figure out which of two women claiming to be the mother of an infant was the real one, ordered the baby sliced in half, and the real mother offered to give up her claim to save her child. President Macapagal-Arroyo's moves between giving good governance to the country and ensuring she is surrounded by people primarily loyal to her and who have rendered useful service to her in the past, has chosen political payback over improved governance. There are compelling reasons that make this conclusion unavoidable.

In the case of Ronaldo Puno, he has been tarnished by cases that remain unresolved. Regardless of his innocence or guilt—unproven, after all, as the cases remain untried and undecided—he also has a reputation for ruthless, unnecessary service as a political operative that began with the Marcos administration and continues to the present one. Aside from his alleged expertise in electoral strategy (and supposedly manipulation), he is also a fixture of the President's very own, personal pet party, Kampi. The nature of the portfolio he has been given, which gives him supervision over local governments and authority over the Philippine National Police—makes Puno a handy fixer, indeed, to have on hand. Particularly handy, it must be added, at a time of military unrest. When big pushes by local governments for no-election scenarios and a possible constitutional referendum are on the horizon, his skills should be irresistible, no. Being a survivor, Puno's reaction to the announcement of his appointment has been predictable: to hedge his bets, he has refused to resign from Congress until he is confirmed by the Commission on Appointments.

As for Rolando Andaya, he has been a "subject matter" for some time, the Department of Education being his preferred option. Granted, he becomes the President's lawyer, at a time when a great deal of lawyering with regard not only to a possible revived impeachment (fashioned by Hachero's colleagues in the House of the Liberal Party), but to various national-level issuances questioned before the courts, is ahead.

And in terms of Rolando Andaya's appointment, the message being sent is clear: the hands is open for business. In truth, Andaya has long prepared for his appointment. Since the resignation of Emilia Boncodin, Andaya has been attending meetings at the Department of Budget and Management. A vocal defender of the congressional pork barrel (his project include rehabilitating the Quirino Highway, coincidentally now renamed after his father), and by all accounts a master of the House budgetary process, Andaya will certainly be accessible to his former colleagues. Whether he will maintain the fiscal and budgetary firmness of the country in the face of the need to keep the President's political coalition well backed is another matter. While Boncodin could say no to the legions expecting presidential doles, or at least put the squeeze on requests so as to make them more difficult, Andaya, by experience and temperament can be expected to have the opposite attitude. This doesn't bode well for fiscal discipline, which the government needs to trim the budget deficit and reduce its debts.

All together, these appointments point to their end to optimism: the President's desire to survive at all costs.

GMA shares blame for Ultra tragedy

As I See It

Neal H. Cruz

JUSTICE SECRETARY RAUL GONZALEZ SAID of the stampede at Ultra (which has been renamed Philsports Arena) that left 74 people dead and at least 300 injured that there were "shortcomings" in the security preparations for the ill-fated boxing show of MBC-DZBB's "Wowowee." He added, "There will definitely be people responsible. There's only the order of the President; it is final criminal or civil liabilities."

For her part, President Macapagal-Arroyo said, "I assure the victims' kin that the results of criminal and (civil) justice will be served and those responsible will be taken to account for their negligence or misdeeds."

What more statements. GMA and Gonzalez may be thinking of the security department as the cause of the whole management of MBC-DZBB, but if we were to be honest and come right down to it, the blame goes all the way up to the President.

Why her, when she had nothing to do with the show? But an Ermelito himself said, "In cases of negligence and accidents, (supposedly) has no liability but only administrative liability." And who bears the ultimate responsibility for GMA?

Those who were in Ultra were among the Philippines' poorest, mostly jobless citizens. They went there to die to win some of the money to be raffled off in the show. It was their only hope to alleviate their extreme poverty. They had been there waiting for days in their desperation, they were scrambling to get the tickets that would entitle them to participate in the raffle. That was why there was pushing and shoving until the mad hysteria in the gate gave way and those behind trampled the unfortunate ones in front, mostly women and children. If they weren't the very poor tempted by the generous prizes in the show, they wouldn't have been there, there would have been no stampede, and the TV would still have been alive today.

Because of the unprecedented duress of a president is to help the poor and give them jobs. This, the incumbent President, no doubt about it, failed to do. She did not live up to her responsibility. On the contrary, many of the people in Ultra said they had become poorer in the last few years, already during the administration of Cory.

Although she was throwing billions of pesos around to please the military, the police, government employees, congressmen and local government officials, she did not provide funds to create jobs for the poor. That is negligence pure and simple.

Ultimately, the responsibility rests on her head. She decided to run for President to answer for the tragedy.

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The tragedy was also be traced to the outrage now between the two leading channels, 2 and 7. MBC-TV's "Eat Bulaga" has long been the ratings champion in the mountains and, giving out generous prizes to contestants. ABS-CBN countered by launching "Wowowee" in the same time slot, giving out even more generous prizes that were easier to win. What happened last Saturday is the pitched battle too much success.

The show attracted an unruly following (more than 60,000 to 80,000 people, some coming from faraway provinces, flocked to Ultra for the scheduled anniversary show last Saturday, during which P6.4 million in cash, a house and lot, a passenger jeepney and a tricycle were scheduled to be raffled off. If it had not been suspended because of the tragedy, the show would have been the new champion in the ratings war.

But that is the only reason (aside of the outrage now. There are other remembrance wounds. The two channels have begun imitating each other. If one has a nationwide show, the other puts up a similar show in the same time slot. GMA-7 has a "Kapuso Foundation" raising funds for charity, as ABS-CBN has its "Kapamilya" and "Bantay Bata" also raising funds for charity. Both channels had canvassed the Philippines and the United States with their own glitzy shows to promote their respective programs.

From the news programs became victims of this ratings war. Because stories about "miracles," superstitions, the occult and freaks, and crime attract high viewership, the two channels' news units are opportunely to air stories about extensive weeping blood, girls being possessed by evil spirits, images of the Virgin Mary seen on banana plants, human and animal babies with two heads and other freaks, manananggal and aswang terrorizing neighborhoods—shocking that's viewers take it from who believe in superstitions and non-existent monsters.

Because show-biz gossip also attracts viewers, their news segments have regular entertainment gossip about movie stars having (sex) escapades, showbiz feuds alcohol-and-drug binges and movie workers. Both promote their own soap operas with long and repetitive plugs. They compete with each other to the number of stories tagged as "exclusives" when it is obvious that they are used because the other channels also have the same stories.

Now, it is all right for them to have shows devoted to show business, but please don't smuggle them into the news programs. They defeat from the importance and currentness of the news and irritate the viewers who don't want the real news.

In turn, the ratings war is dictated by the winning habit of the advertisers to give priority to shows with high ratings, not realizing that some programs with high ratings (such as those I mentioned above) have mostly C, D, E viewers, many of whom cannot afford the products they are advertising. In the final analysis, their commercials do not advance the desired results.

Whose will these woes up to this fact?

What dreams may come

There's the Rub

Conrado de Quiros

AS FAR AS I KNOW, IT WAS MY FRIEND Pancho Lim who originated that idea that the campaign late Gatchalian was the true state of the economy. The stampede, he mused in a text message, seemed to him to reflect the way things were: economically more than ever. Here announcements about the dollar having fallen to 3 to 53 pesos. The real conversion rate, Pancho said, was not 53 to 1, it was 64 to 1. At least so it was in the morning of Saturday) to cut rival. Before Ultra it, the message was flying high and free in the form of coins and notation. But Thatcher is Pancho having begun it.

It's a good insight, and hits the nail right on the head. It puts into words a thought that lies in dormant or inchoate form in many people's minds. Saturday's tragedy has driven home the point of how desperate people have become. The promise of relief or respite or, in this case, a pot of gold driving them to go into a mindless and heavy to get ahead of the line. The images of the living and the dead smeared to the dire straits of those who had gathered there hoping for a bit of luck or of being lucky enough to be decent old women in particular who had staggered there for a crack at salvation.

There was a combustible mix, as I said before, rash need and a slit of hope, and the organizers of that event should have had the sense to see it and take every care to prevent its combustion. We've seen it before already, and we can only thank our lucky stars there were less tragic consequences.

That was the case in the distribution of the relief goods to Infanta after the Ulbet storm and landslide struck in the other December, the people jostling and shoving and elbowing to get inside the steel underfoot at the first sign of the trucks carrying relief goods. The victims had had no water for some time, which was their main concern, more than food. When the first trucks arrived, they were thronged by the mad, and the latter were dumped, then had to be protected by soldiers and heavy arms from being overrun.

That was the case in the distribution of the rice under the Ulbet scam, the people lining up for hours in the sun, some of them dying of heatstroke, to get their measly allotment of rice. Some of them were even killed in the stampede that ensued when the rice ran out.

Those were the cases that were known to the public. There were many more that were not known to the public. Many of the poor have to fight for every scrap of food, every drop of water, every bit of medicine, every square inch of space to live in. Many of them have to die for the same reasons.

One might argue that that was a different time, that was a matter of survival, that was a matter of life and death. But look at the lives of the rich and famous, children and men (in that order) that queued at Ultra and leave over their lamentations to the heavens and say if that wasn't a matter of survival, if that wasn't a matter of life and death.

Indeed, we've seen it in more benign forms in the long queues that form before the lotto agencies in malls and streets. The last one, which advertised close to P200 million, had queues that positively obstructed normal street corners. I wonder that if not for those long lines, which assembled me all the lines that form in the banks, the faithful waiting patiently for a glimpse of the clerks. I myself would have bought a ticket or two for a crack at fortune-cum. I've been scrolling my self off my life, and for most of that life barely keeping my head above water.

It's a grim reminder and affirmation of what Gabriela Silang has been saying in various forums. That this country has a way of punishing on hardship to the people in times of want and keeping blessings away from them in times of plenty. The poor are getting poorer for the simple reason that they are getting more and less, whatever this country's economic condition is. As Fidito says, even during the economic boom of the mid 1990s, the human administration failed to alleviate poverty. It failed to distribute the wealth, the thing getting much richer while people got to know, he was former economic planning czar.

If that was true during former time, that is even more today. GMA's government has borrowed more and more money, and for every P1.0 that it collects, it pays P6 to service debt, a thing unprecedented in this country's history as Hidito points out. The remaining P1, well, no one can safely surmise it goes to pay for Hello Garci.

All of which shows the monumental folly of saying one is "tired of politics," let's move on" and concentrate on the economy. Politics does not just decide what kind of economic plans are made, it decides who will be the leaders of priorities and the impact of bad policies. You get tired of politics, you'll move on only to been poverty and hardship however the economy goes. Or as if you're already poor. If you're rich, or average, you'll get over either, over, if the economy becomes the hardest case of Asia. Which it is today.

But all this is recited as and understandable unity to those who have the less and years, ing for it. There is the tragedy last Saturday to show that government's claims about economic progress are like a huge billboard hiding a festering slum from the prying eyes of visiting dignitaries. The press may have rallied against the dollar but none of that is giving the poor a breather. Between GMA's promise of jobonline and Ishiba Bonifacio's "Heaven is Asleep," the poor know which one they have more chance on pasilo from. It is the face of poverty. It is the true state of the nation. The poor have gotten so poor they are reduced to prayer and lotto, the Black Nazarene and the blackguard Willie Revillame, the rosary and "Wowowee" for their survival.

That is what the people's dreams are now made of. "To sleep: perchance to dream: ay, there's the rub; For in that sleep of death what dreams may come," That is part of Hamlet's famous "To be or not to be" soliloquy, which used to be memorized by high school kids in darkness and wonder.

What dreams may come indeed in the sleep of death.

The Islamic democratic paradox

THOMAS ACROSETTE: ASIA WORLD 2008, the publication in Denmark (months ago) of cartoons depicting the Prophet Muhammad, together with the convoy of Iranian politicians and the increasing radicalization of many publics, has made 'political Islam' a fundamental question of international diplomacy. But a one-size-fits-all response would work. Instead, we need to abandon the idea that there is a holistic or global Islamist movement.

Political Islam of all colors has emerged as the main alternative to secular Arab nationalist regimes that have legitimacy issues and the struggle for national liberation has evaporated due to their inability to resolve economic and social problems, establish the rule of law, and guarantee fundamental freedoms. In Palestine, for example, Hamas has triumphed over Fatah because of years of bad governance under the harsh conditions spawned by Israeli occupation.

Islamists, European and American governments, and the media all tend to lump "political Islamists" in here secular nationalists like Nasir, and so have defended the status quo. But rejectionism of all Arab nationalist movements by this expects trends to aid secular democrats denies that Islamists have also emerged out of the ashes of the failed pan-Arab states.

There are already many examples of more or less conservative Islamist parties willing to play by the rules of democracy. Most obvious are Islamists in the legislatures of all the countries undergoing some form of political reform, including Lebanon, where Hezbollah is part of a heavily elected government, as well as in Iraq and Morocco.

Commentary

Álvaro de Vasconcelos

In Egypt, the Muslim Brotherhood has become a strong force in parliament despite the limits imposed on the participation of Islamist groups in last year's elections. In Iraq, key elections have created the dominant influence of Islamist regimes. In Turkey, the transition to democracy led the Islamist moderate and development party to power. This government has undertaken serious important democratic reforms and initiated successful negotiations with the European Union. These Islamist parties have nothing to do with al- Qaida, even though some of the most conservative among them have adopted some of the similar ideological positions.

The Arab Islamists are not committed to the end to the victory of Islamist parties in a democratic process that Europe and the United States must accept if they are to devise inclusive reform policies—in other words, policies that put the political opponents to the test of democratic competition practices to recognize Iraq, Kuwait, one of the most fair parties competitions of the Islamists in Iraq was to withdraw the notion of a "clash of civilizations" between the three Muslim faiths, which in turn served to create a climate favorable to Islamist movements.

After all, political reform movements in the Muslim world emerged long before the US-led "war on terror" and reformers were not waiting for the US to become a key to gains for change. These movements were not created in the United States or Europe after Sept. 11, 2001, and they will not wait for or depend on the United States or the US or EU policies. The success of Muslim moderation may well depend on how the EU and the United States respond to pressure for reform and how they decide to encourage change.

It is now necessary to show that democracy is the best path for Palestinians to attain their national goals. This depends largely on the new European and American policy of conditionality. Democratic force that respects the rule of law democracy and international equity. But it also depends on Israel and the international community, which must do all they can to ensure a future Palestinian state with dynamism as its capital.

Supporting Palestinian democratization does not mean that the international community should not demand that Hamas abandon its terrorist acts and its anti-Semitic rhetoric. The democratic commitments and ideology that embodies it is the heart of Israel. But it also does not mean support for any initiative that would have the Palestinians people allow they have expressed their will democratically. This would be a terrible mistake in terms of the law on consolidate Hamas's new democracy with a negative impact in other reforming countries in the Arab world.

Similarly, according the right of non-violent Islamists to participate in public life does not mean giving up on the political and ideological struggle to defeat anti-democratic, and in some cases anti-Semitic, conceptions of society. Confronting Islamists' ideas, conceptions of society, and their religious sensitivities of others do not mean that we need to question press freedom or accept the Islamists' demands for censorship, even when in a religious sensitivities. Defenders, as is the case of the Danish cartoonists. Islamist sympathizers of society that violate individual rights must be expressed politically.

The real political challenge is one of the particulars of democracy, which values all those who compete freely with each other. Political Islam is a risk, but we can minimize it only by devising intelligent, non-coercive strategies that promote democracy and by denouncing the conduct of democratic choice.

Project Syndicate

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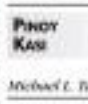
Mob control

LAST MONDAY, THE INQUIRER PUBLISHED A SERIAL list of fatalities from the Ohio campsite. Skimming through the names, I quickly realized that of the 93 listed, only two were male deaths.

Women of the epic tend to attract more fatalities than males, but I still think the proportion of female deaths is much too high. A more plausible reason is that there were more women at the front of the lines, as when the stampede broke out, they were the ones who were crushed to death.

That leads us to another question. What is it about people that makes them—some of them were false—so be put in battle's way?



PINOY KASI

Michael L. Tan

Much has been written about the sea poverty and despair compared to some that tragedy I think we need to revisit, too, of some serious changes going on in society that compound the problems even more.

The problem with the "deserves" even named just crowd control, it was a mob out there.

We've had with queuing. It's not an exclusively Filipino trait, I will quickly very quickly here. Queuing is something that comes naturally to us. We're civilized in the sense that there is a way of respecting the rights of people. When you jump a queue, and that includes the to prevent counterflow on the roads, you are being unfair in violating the rights of others who have waited.

Many of those who did queue up for "deserves" tickets, some in other words, were in advance, might be those who were from the elders, you can see the same there at the back, and this is not anything new just don't have the patience for lines, as they were all the last minute . . . and then got impatient.

This is not to say women don't jump queues, sometimes they do, but generally get in their way and with a vengeance. It's harder to intimidate a woman trying to get into the line, and I've experienced quite a few "small but terrible" ones showing their way through as if as people were invisible only.

And yes if we do, let a lola get her way as she jumps the queue, it's really our way of expressing both respect for the elderly and a sense of fairness, recognizing her special needs.

At the "Pinoy-ness" event, all that orderly went out the window. Let's just be thankful CNN and BBC didn't mention that many of those who were trampled to death were lolas.

Limited good

If you look at the global literature on deadly stampedes, you'll find they're usually of two types: One would be those that occur at those yearly in Mecca, during the hajj. Here, the problem is that the large number of pilgrims (you're talking of as many as two million in one place) simply overwhelm the security measures.

The other category of deadly stampedes occur around football. Here the problem is usually one of hysterical fervor, of mainly male fans caught up in their fanaticism over the sport, sometimes with brawling.

The Ultra stampede doesn't fit into the global pattern. What we have here is something that was described correctly by Inquirer columnist Conrado de Quiros as a "tragedy of limited good," the idea that certain "good" resources are limited. He was studying a Mexican village and noted that whenever someone experienced good fortune...sudden wealth, for example...envious tension spread that the person had removed even a part with the limit.

On the Ultra event, the limited good was the concert seats, we call this our "leak mentality": instead of congratulating people who have done well, we just think down, much like cattle in a herder, and dominance comparisons, favoritisms, connections.

In boxer their outings, the "deserves" promoters offered a large number of free tickets and raffle prizes, assuming people even from outside Metro Manila. People were desperate for a chance to get in, but knew as well the "goods" (tickets, prizes) were limited. Rumor this every day in the TV networks would-be, smaller but still substantial rewards of 4,000 or 5,000 in a store, queuing to be able to touch one of the mannequins in the display window, promotions as well as a chance to participate in games and win prizes.

The tragedy at Ultra was a deadlier form of the entertainment. The refusal to line up properly was really another way of saying, "I don't care if there aren't up and waited, I deserve some of the goods as well, and if I can't get in, no one else will."

Personal? You see it every day on our streets, in the traffic gridlocks caused by motorists who violate traffic rules to block an intersection and they won't give way.

More disasters

One logic government officials should go out into the real streets and see why these disasters might be more likely than ever proclaiming. Visit the lower-end malls on a weekend and watch the crowds, packed shoulder to shoulder, trying to catch a free celebrity performance or navigating their way around luggage that try to push to be too many malls. Try looking for the exits and figure out how you're going to evacuate a large number of people in a hurry.

Or just take long queues for tickets at the LRT station, especially the one at North Edsa. A stampede can break out there for any number of reasons—a bomb scare, a fire—and there will be many lives lost because the exit area is just too narrow. The chances for disaster are amplified by the way the security guards at the entrance handle all of lowlife people by the queue and others processing, "Pumila ka. Gusto ng ID?" Strangers are understandably fleeced, a crowd always ready to misuse into a mob.

While other countries seem to be more civil, we seem to become more rude, more crude, by the day. I've been to many subway systems and I just push line, but there's always room to get to the front. I've seen young kids do this to the elderly in supermarkets, and I'm talking here about Batman's, so let's not point the finger at the "nouveaux" and the "poor" alone. In fact, class is an important factor at forming our inability to queue—even your duties don't set of a higher than-thou other people, and therefore decided to get ahead of that "lower class" person in the line. Others are even worse, thinking that their big age is towards their class, period.

What to do now? Officials give preferential boarding to kids, the elderly and the disabled (or differently abled), we should have a similar treatment to those in their long queues, whether for something like "Deserves" or for LRT tickets.

Getting people to queue is another matter. We use it mostly for one, to some extent, in grocery stops, which shows it is possible to train ourselves. But ultimately, we need to be very conscious of our queuing as a matter of virtue, of patience and of fairness. And looking back at the Ultra tragedy, we might add now that queuing may sometimes be a matter of life and death.

Breaking news and 'sawa' journalism

ON THE MORNING OF FEB. 4, SATURDAY, TWO weeks and one day of the aborted "Mendiola Peace Rally" that ended in violence, chaos and bloodshed, the ABS-CBN contingent (without me of the confrontation room, with MNC anchor Ricky Carandang hurriedly explaining that they were off to cover the "Mendiola rally").

The last of us would find out later, by word of mouth and text messages, what the "breaking news" was, and it seemed no-one (my use of ego-ging is not intentional) was in any hurry to get there.

Talk about giving the market what it wants!" one participant remarked. The deadly stampede at the Philippine Arena is one of the rare occasions in which the entertainment media's insatiable appetite for the bizarre and the sensational delivered, as well as heated competition for a shrinking advertising pie, led to the evasion of a public show with the potential to be extremely grounded not just in spectacle (there was no shortage of that) but of more to distract the audience just for showing up. And when the crowd that gathered to see Iglesia ni Cristo leader Eduardo Manalo (who?) and hundreds here of not being among the lucky few to be ushered into the arena, they were in the mood for some old-fashioned mob violence.

A reader whom had been advanced me just this year but in previous multicolored comments was the responsibility of broadcast networks to isolate their news and public affairs departments from the pressures of ratings—and thereby having to "salve" their consents to meet market demands.

The Philippine newsroom agents for a free-rides to allow them (as of a public to-source—the airwaves—for their own profit, they have an obligation to perform public service. By news of news and public affairs programs. This was why the cozy status-quo lasted 20 years ago, the old-timers among the participants asserted. But the parents disagreed entirely when TV news ratings began pulling in the ratings, leading network management to reassess the worth of the same yardstick to which they subjected their entertainment departments.

TV reporters interviewed this time, noting how the ratings-driven methodology has evolved to such an extent that a "minute-by-minute" measurement can be taken even in a news program airs. "Wow, to see if your show is changing the audience, so your producer is telling," one reporter said. "If it happens too often, your stories might get bumped down to the last minutes of the newscast."

A TEAM existed during the station was "news journalism," among from the observation that, in at least one network, a story on the discovery of a perfect-size dinosaur-cover revealing, it's difficult to do that time on the news. Or that a story on the Pope through one factor has to be the dreaming needs of singing hardliners carrying out the giant three-ring circus in the middle road of community members.

"There's backlash to be a station," laughed a TV news producer. And indeed, it's been found that there's a disproportionate number of pylons around the country, thus, the airing of a "news" story of a mob scene, or a mob in the making momentum, with people eagerly calling the station each time they discover a giant snake or went to be tracked their "pet" in the barbershop.

The mobs broke it perfectly ordered. I remember one such scene of scraps about abused horses, with the discovery of a horse reported each evening, and heartily ate commercializing, such as the gruesome number of a particular horse's story and why women are driven to such desperate lengths to the point of endangering their lives.

This would all be simply amusing if such stories did not bring with it a number of greater significance. Or else, an inverse theory—larger of the newscast, preventing reporters from going into more depth on important stories. There are certainly issues on which we need more enlightenment as to see than the "feeling of the moment" sees.

* * *

With the moment, the news spotlight is focused on the aftermath of the Philippine Arena stampede, specifically the deployment of operatives of ABS-CBN, as the organizer of the "Pamasko" extravaganza, for the deaths of 79 people and the injuries of more than 500.

It is a situation ripe for investigations, as well as the front pages of newspapers, have been devoted for the last few days to the disaster and its aftermath. Heart-rending indeed have been the stories and footage of the scene in front of the gate, as well as of grieving families loudly wailing as one shocked into consternation at the seemingly unending deaths.

The media have also been filled with commentators willing to air the usual sentiments, from how the frantic crowd symbolized the poverty and desperation of the masses in the Philippines to the lack of decency preparedness of Filipinos in general.

There are all proper responses, if not a little too productive. But at least the coverage has expanded into important issues. I wonder, though, when we'll soon be swamped again with images of sawa.

The first push

Commentary

Bud Torres

And, of course, there are not to mind against President Macapagal-Arroyo would place the blame for the deaths on her. Her critics will see at the night directly by the desperate attempt to escape the poverty this administration has inflicted on the masses, that people would storm at anything for a game show and their tickets cost.

But whether a sound management or irresponsible may have had some part in this, I think greater blame lays elsewhere.

I blame the mob.

This may not be the most politically correct statement to make, since all the victims were part of the mob. I am saddened by the deaths and injuries, but I cannot say that the network was actually to blame. Neither can I blame Jay the organizer as God's fire.

Given the thousands of people warned pushing and shoving, what kind of crowd control measures were taken? Game prods? Tear gas? Riot police with truncheons?

Or was ABS-CBN to fault for giving people this game show so pin their hopes and dreams on? Should all casinos offering money or prizes be banned? Perhaps.

To say that desperation moved these thousands of people to push, to shove, to trample on one another in the mad scramble for a chance at fame? Undoubtedly. To say that government made all this happen and thus the government is to blame, one would have to prove first that these people were ill-impoverished, and that their poverty is really the government's fault. There are no statements I will accept without proof. And a solid lawsuit for DSWA is definitely not proof.

In strikes me how much neighbored Filipinos are willing to push past each other. Lines, be it for rides, for games, or even the traffic that moves. Survivors swerving maniacally, jumping, picking up or stepping off passengers in the middle of the road, and illegal counterflows. Look at pedestrians crossing under a pedestrian overpass, and watch them give dagger looks when motorists honk their horns at them.

I've found this even getting into the mall at Sandiganbayan. Struggle to get through the metal detector into one small doorway, instead of lining up single-file and proceeding in an orderly fashion. Or in the supermarket, when people line up cashiers, they will not wait for the person before them paying the sign that says "12 items or less." In the drivers, there is always one lone who will not turn off his cellphone or put it on silent mode.

You can see people are just trying to get ahead of the pack, evidence of a complete disregard for others around them, oblivious considering the consequences of their actions. If it benefits them, they do it, without looking back.

Desperation is a one-thing. Becoming such is that it involves. We do not evaluate or humanize who do to be things they do because of poverty. Neither should poverty and desperation be used as an excuse to be inhuman to others. Poverty is not an excuse to trample upon your fellow man in order to grab that item first.

The dozen injured because someone would not see, someone would not wait, someone had to push, and that someone insisted pushing. And the person he pushed, pushed the one in front of him. And at the flap of a butterfly's wings was cause a hurricane, that would-be relief never had existed, were all the innocents caught in its wake.

I am sure the investigators will look into the incidents. ABS-CBN will be sued for the crowd. And I am sure there will be many more articles, network executives' heads on spikes for their stupidity, blaming them for negligence and corporate greed. I am sure the point is missed as to those of blame for the poverty and desperation that drove this mob on.

That blame need be misplaced.

The hands that are pulled with the blood of children are those of the person who gave rise to the first push.

Bud Torres is a young lawyer working in the Supreme Court.

That wonderful word 'nice'

LETTERS

ISABELLE BODOLOYO FORNCHILDED joice, "Mr Senior Bomb" DPH, 1/24/06) reminded me of two young women who met years after their high school days. The quiet one inquired about what the complainer-to-be had been up to. The latter regaled the former with fantastic stories about how she was living the high life—fancy clothes and cars, the bling and that bling and other worldly pleasures. Twenty years of luxurious and exciting life sophisticated one, the quiet one would just say "that's nice."

This is one the sophisticated one's cues to ask what the quiet one had been doing. The quiet one replied: "Oh, not much. My parents are not so fashionable as yours."

And how was that? the sophisticated one queried with a noticeable lack of genuine interest.

"Oh, very boring, really. The only thing the mother's kept hammering on us was never to say 'x_x' and say 'nice' instead.

—LEANDRO S. CORONEL

No smugglers attended Estrada-Farolan meeting

THIS IS IN REACTION TO JASMIN TUL-ley's Jan. 25 column, titled "Jinggoy's acting again," where he intimated that Sen. Jinggoy Estrada, during the incumbency of his father, President Joseph Estrada, used his influence to protect and accommodate known smugglers. Tulfo even named Rolf Ilac, his source, the source introduced some alleged smugglers to then Customs Commissioner Ramon Isberto, with the instruction that they be left unmolested.

Although a meeting did take place between the senator and Isberto, we would to clarify that it was a dinner meeting and not a lunch meeting. Moreover, the dinner meeting was only attended by three people: Estrada, Farolan and Colonel Isidro.

During that meeting, the senator merely introduced the policy laid down by President Estrada that the Bureau of Customs should place hybrid bars anyone who as to the name of any member of the Estrada family is just undue advantage over legitimate businesses in the country.

It would be prudent on Tulfo's part if he first checks and verifies his sources, as well as his facts so that he will not unduly spread half-truths and outright lies which are gravely unjust to the name and reputation of innocent people like Senator Estrada.

—ROBERTO M. GARCIA, JR.,
chief of staff
Office of Sen. Jinggoy Ejercito Estrada,
GSIS Building,
Financial Center, Pasay City

PHILIPPINE CARABAO CENTER
Department of Agriculture

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

February 6, 2006

THIS IS AN INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID for the following:

Package	Particulars	Approved Budget for the Contract
1	Motion Furniture and Equipment	P 150,000.00
2	VHEA System with accessories and other refurbishing/parts	150,000.00
Total		P 1,400,000.00

Prospective bidders should have experience in undertaking a similar project within the last two (2) years with an amount of at least 50% of the abovecomputed for bidding. The Eligibility Check and Screening as well as the Preliminary Examination of Bids shall use a non-discretionary "pass/fail" criteria. Post-qualification of the lowest calculated bid shall be conducted.

All particulars relative to Eligibility Statement and Screening, Bid Security, Performance Security, Pre-Bidding Conference, Evaluation of Bids, Post-Qualification and Award of Contract shall be governed by the pertinent provisions of R.A. 9184 and its Implementing Rules and Regulations.

The complete schedule of activities is listed, as follows:

Activities	Schedule
1. Issuance of Bid Documents	February 20 to 24, 2006
2. Pre-bid Conference (Attendance shall PCC Headquarters and Game Post, Science City of Muñoz, Nueva Ecija)	March 13, 2006 (10:00 a.m.)
3. Opening of Bids (Attendance shall PCC Headquarters and Game Post, Science City of Muñoz, Nueva Ecija)	March 28, 2006
4. Bid Evaluation	March 29 to April 5, 2006
5. Post-qualification	April 6 to 12, 2006
6. Notice of Award	10 calendar days after Post Qualification period

Bid Documents will be available only to prospective bidders upon payment of a non-refundable amount of Five Hundred Pesos (P500.00) to the PCC Cashier.

PCC reserves its responsibility whatsoever to compensate or indemnify bidders for any expenses incurred in the preparation of bid.

(sgd.) ISILDORO M. MONTEBALTO
Chairman
Bids and Awards Committee

PHILIPPINE CARABAO CENTER
Department of Agriculture

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

February 6, 2006

This Philippine Carabao Center (PCC), an attached agency of the Department of Agriculture, invites supplier/contractors to apply for eligibility and to bid for the project described below:

Name of Project	"Sustainable System of Propagation for Superior Genetics Dairy Buffaloes for Smallholder Farmers"
Location	PCC National Dairy Post and Headquarters, Science City of Muñoz, Nueva Ecija
Brief Description	Supply 500 heads crossbreds (PCC480) carabaos
Approved Budget for the Contract	P15,000,000.00
Contract Duration	180 calendar days
Delivery Period	90 calendar days

Prospective bidders should have experience in undertaking a similar project within the last two (2) years with an amount of at least 50% of the abovecomputed for bidding. The Eligibility Check as well as the Preliminary Examination of Bids shall use a non-discretionary "pass/fail" criteria. Post qualification of the lowest calculated bid shall be conducted.

All particulars relative to Eligibility Statement and Screening, Bid Security, Performance Security, Pre-Bidding Conferences, Evaluation of Bids, Post-Qualification and Award of Contract shall be governed by the pertinent provisions of Republic Act 9184 and its Implementing Rules and Regulations.

The complete schedule of activities is listed, as follows:

Activities	Schedule
1. Issuance of Bid Documents	February 27 to March 3, 2006
2. Pre-bid Conference (Attendance shall PCC Headquarters and Game Post, Science City of Muñoz, Nueva Ecija)	March 20, 2006 (10:00 a.m.)
3. Opening of Bids (Attendance shall PCC Headquarters and Game Post, Science City of Muñoz, Nueva Ecija)	April 3, 2006 (10:00 a.m.)
4. Bid Evaluation	April 5 to 19, 2006
5. Post-qualification	April 19 to 20, 2006
6. Notice of Award	10 calendar days after Post Qualification period

Bid Documents will be available only to prospective bidders upon payment of a non-refundable amount of Five Hundred Pesos (P500.00) to the PCC Cashier.

PCC reserves its responsibility whatsoever to compensate or indemnify bidders for any expenses incurred in the preparation of bid.

(sgd.) ISILDORO M. MONTEBALTO
Chairman
Bids and Awards Committee

GMA is the solution

I CANNOT BELIEVE THAT DESPITE THE PROWESS OF-sincerity of Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, a few people would still believe that the solution to the country's problems would be found by convening the so-called Council of State. If true GMA has left who created the problems. In fact, she is the main problem and her stepping down is the main solution.

As long as she adamantly continues to occupy the power once bestowed, the problems will linger, coups will remain a possibility and she will spend most of her time serving herself. She cannot function effectively as her sole priority is to protect herself and her own interests and power to her hold on the presidency. The interests of the country will just be secondary.

Former President Corazon Aquino did right when she refused to play a part in that Council of State charade. If principled persons like her find participated, they would have been used merely as props in a real life drama staged managed by GMA and her ilk.

It would be naive for anyone to think that GMA's hypocritical connections, like the Council of State, can still serve the nation.

—RAMON MAYUGA,
Ramon@angat.net.com

Ninoy-Pacquiao: wrong comparison

IN THE JAN. 30 COLUMN, RIGAN Tirtschel wrote: "It may be exaggerated, but Jan. 21, 2006, when Pinoypinoy compared Morales to average a previous loss, could be equal in importance, if not in significance, to Aug. 21, 1983, when Ninoy Aquino was slain upon his return to his beloved country."

Upon reading this, I nearly fell off my seat. I wonder what was Tirtschel's basis for putting these two events on the same level. Aug. 21, 1983 was not the death of Ninoy Aquino. It was the rebirth of democracy and the remembering of the Filipino people. Jan. 21, 2006 was nothing more than a perfect example of what hard work and discipline can do.

Aug. 21, 1983 was the beginning of the new dawn for the Philippines and that not a new course for the country while Jan 22, 2006 was nothing more than a media spectacle.

Aug. 21, 1983 was the final victory of a man who stood and fought a long and lonely battle almost by himself during one of the darkest and most trying times in our nation's history where freedom was at stake, while Jan. 21, 2006 was just another jaded fight, securing millions for the fighters, promoters and media handlers.

The comparison Tirtschel made was not only exaggerated but also lowers all our capabilities and importance.

—RUBEN C. BUSAL,
#15-A Street,
West Kamias, Quezon City

Samar's roads do not lead to progress

IT WAS THE FONDEST DREAM OF MY brother-in-law (and his kids, my niece and nephew), after spending 18 years in the United States, to visit his hometown. They realized their dream last Dec. 29, 2005 to January 2006. The whole family was excited to see his "Pinabuong Lupa" after his long absence. The travel to Samar, the progress, the accomplishments, the beauty and the splendor of our country. After all, the Department of Tourism has been encouraging us to visit our beautiful nation first.

Since I am also from Samar, I joined my sister, brother-in-law and others in their visit to Catbalogan, Samar. But an unpleasant experience dampened our excitement, happiness and fun. To our dismay we found the roads to Catbalogan so terrible, so heavy on the chest like the list of our sins suddenly burst, and this while we were on a road stretch that was poorly lighted. Our fun, happiness and dream of enjoying the trip to our beloved hometown turned into a nightmare because of the poor, terrible roads. We felt so discouraged and helpless during the incident. The travel to the newly acquired Samar was now totally damaged.

In spite of the frustrations and frustrations experienced by my brother-in-law and his family in that trip, they're still looking forward to visit Catbalogan again, but hoping that next time the roads will be well paved and repaired.

—REV. FR. FIDEL C. SARILLE,
parish priest,
Mary Immaculate Parish,
Mooreall, Village, Las Piñas City

Yes, tired of GMA, not of political noise

I CANNOT RESPECT AGREE WITH CON-sultant de Ledesma in his column "Change," DPH, 1/19/06) (is it right: The public is not tired of "political noise," the public is tired of Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo. And over those past weeks, probably of Fidel Ramos and Jose de Venecia, too.

Look at the survey. No, just listen to your neighbors. They do not say that the overwhelming majority of Filipinos find that the Charter debates, they say the overwhelming majority of Filipinos find those President defective.

It therefore behooves GMA "to my mad cat' down," to quote former US Sen. Paul Laxalt in order to save our country from political problems.

—GREGORIO B. FILAR,
vice mayor,
Naguajan, Laguna

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February 12, 2006 (Sunday)
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Robinsons Place Pioneer
Robinsons Place Dasmariñas
Robinsons Place Cavite
Robinsons Place Sta. Rosa
Robinsons Place Angeles
Robinsons Place Manila

Angel Locsin
Mark Herras
Jennylyn Mercado
Ina Feleo
Ryan Cayabyab and CJ Muere
Ara Mina and Joe d Mango

Mark Herras
Jennylyn Mercado
Isabel Oli
Ryan Cayabyab and CJ Muere
Rainier Castillo
Yasmien Kurdi
Ara Mina and Joe d Mango

All shows start at 4pm

Robinsons Malls

Across the NATION

Mine execs decry bishops' 'influence'

DAVAO CITY—LEADERS OF THE MINING INdustry in Southern Mindanao have warned the Arroyo administration against giving in to the demand of Roman Catholic bishops to repeal the Mining Act of 1995, saying the call was "undue influence" of the Church in government affairs.

"That would be an undue influence, and we will not allow that," said lawyer Melanio Ambrosio of Philex Mining.

If and when the Presidency gives in to the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines' demand to ensure the Church's support for her to remain in power, mining industry players will definitely stand in the way, he added.

Ambrosio said the government could not go to the mountains and feed the indigenous peoples (IPs) who would suffer the brunt of economic hardships should mining activities be stopped.

Following the CBCP statement, President Maria Ipapol Arroyo ordered the suspension of mining activities in Boul. She also directed concerned government agencies to put mining operations throughout the country under closer scrutiny.

Edgar Martinez, president of the Mindanao Association for Mining Industry Inc. (Mina), said the mining sector would be in a collision course with the CBCP if the bishops would insist on their demand without bothering to listen to the side of mining investors and the IPs who claimed to have benefited from mining.

"What the CBCP did was very encouraging. If government will bow to one sector's concern, then there is something wrong in the present administration," Martinez said.

He said the CBCP statement had chilled foreign investors, including those who are not into mining, but have other investments in the country.

Still, Martinez said the mining industry leaders would continue dialogues with concerned groups to come up with a win-win solution to the issue of whether mining was good for the country.

The CBCP issued the statement following reports of rare mining spills in Itogon-Suyoc, Albay which leaked cyanide-laden sludge to the Pacific Ocean.

The spills also stunned a fish scare in Sursogon province after consumers stopped buying fish for fear that these were contaminated with mercury and heavy metals.

Lafayette Mining Inc. (LMI), which operates the Rapu-Rapu mines, has denied using mercury in its operations. Its statement was backed by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources. Jody Baviera, *PDI Mindanao Bureau*

ROAD MONSTER

The quality of Philippine roads could best be gleaned from this collapsed part of Kennon Road in Baguio City that appears to have eaten up a jeepney.

NGO tells gov't ignoring bases toxic waste issue is trade risk

CLARK SPECIAL ECONOMIC ZONE—A NON-government organization demanding the cleanup of former US military bases in the Philippines on Monday warned a top Clark Development Corp. official not to turn a blind eye on the toxic waste problem, saying this was risky to the redevelopment of Clark as an ecozone.

The Aeta's Task Force for Base Clean-up warned executive aide (EAC) president and chief executive officer Ayesmin Ng, called the toxic waste problem a "non-issue." Ng made the statement during a recent meeting with business representatives in Northern and Central Luzon.

Myrla Baldemoro, PTFBC executive director, said the "non-recognition of the problem will lead to further exposure of the immediate inhabitants of the area, including him and his family [in case they live there], to toxic and hazardous wastes that are released in sites that are identified and are potentially contaminated are excavated to give way to redevelopment."

While Ng, who assumed the post in March last year, dispelled the issue, he nevertheless agreed to look into it.

CDC executive vice president, Victor Jose Lacanilao, said the 12 sites identified by an environmental study in 1996 had been closed to mines.

In a statement, Baldemoro said the conversion of Clark could not take place without a cleanup. Public health and environment "cannot be sacrificed in the altar of quick cash," she said.

She said the state-owned CDC could face "enormous consequences if new liability results for damages if they continue not to inform investors of the existing problems." There are almost 400 firms now in Clark employing some by 37,000 workers.

Ng, she said, was "aggressively marketing the property while ignoring the contamination problem which could potentially harm even the management, investors, workers, employees, developers, tourists and the residents of nearby communities."

Baldemoro said there was a "huge body of evidence of contamination" in Clark, at the former Subic Naval Base and other detention facilities that dotted the 130 sq. km. area. Ratification in 1991 on the heels of the Senate's rejection of an extension of the 1947 Philippine-US military bases agreement.

The contamination, she said, was confirmed in reports by the US General Accounting Office (GAO), the investigative arm of US Congress), the US Department of Defense, and the Pentagon's own environmental study.

The Department of Health, for one, confirmed the high levels of lead and arsenic in the blood of several Mt. Pinatubo evacuees who were sheltered in the Clark Air Base Command, a former motor pool of the US Air Force, she said. Tonette Orejas, *PDI Central Luzon Desk*

Group fears court ruling will trigger Nasugbu land grabbing

TAGAYTAY CITY—AN ALLIANCE OF PEOPLE'S and nongovernment organizations in Nasugbu, Batangas has called on the Supreme Court to reverse a decision of the Court of Appeals classifying the entire town as a tourist zone.

Cirelio Catoja, chair of Alyansa 1320, expressed fears that reports of the Supreme Court affirmed the CA decision, it could trigger massive land grabbing not only in Nasugbu but also in other areas in the country which have also been declared tourism zones like Tanay, Boracay and Baguio.

The Supreme Court is supposed to decide on the issue early this year.

The family of Don Pedro Roxas, who owns more than 2,000 hectares of land in Nasugbu, filed a petition for exemption from agrarian reform coverage before the Department of Agrarian Reform and the CA.

The landowners based their petition on Presidential Decree No. 1520 which declared the entire area of Nasugbu, as well as Tanauan and Maragondon in Cavite part of a tourist zone.

The proclamation, however, clarified the need to "conduct the necessary study and to segregate specific geographical areas for concentrated development of both the government and private sectors in developing their tourism potential."

At least 75 percent of Nasugbu is devoted to agriculture, making it an agrarian reform area. According to Alliance 1320, some 3,000 agrarian reform beneficiaries now till more than 6,000 hectares of land.

It said the CA decision automatically reclassifying Nasugbu as a tourist zone subverts presidential Proclamation 1520.

It ignored the constitutional mood by the Philippine Tourism Authority and the local government that they have yet to identify specific geographical areas with tourism potential in Nasugbu, Catoja told the Inquirer in an interview.

"It also ignored the Nasugbu Sangguniang Bayan resolutions attesting to the fact that no extensive or comprehensive land use plan has converted Roxas properties or portions thereof to non-agricultural use," he said. Delfin Mallari, *PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

Republic of the Philippines
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
LIVELIHOOD CORPORATION

INVITATION TO BID

The Livelihood Corporation (LC), a lending institution primarily extending credit facilities to cooperatives and micro-entrepreneurs, is inviting interested parties to join in the public bidding for the sale on an "as is, where is" basis of the following real estate properties:

PROPERTY/ADDRESS	AREA	DESCRIPTION	FLOOR PRICE
1. MAKAN PROPERTY	989.10 sq.m.	Condominium Unit, Whole 3rd Floor	P6,534,000.00
2. LAGUNA PROPERTY	57,564 sq.m.	Industrial Land (If subject lot is subdivided, only Lot 1 will be sold)	P 8,635,000.00
3. TAYUMAN PROPERTY	5,000 sq.m.	Light Industrial Land	P 5,375,000.00
4. MAGALON PROPERTY	5,000 sq.m.	Residential Land	P 4,500,000.00
5. ILOILO PROPERTY	187 sq.m.	Residential Lot (2 Adjoining Lots)	P 600,000.00
6. TABANGAO PROPERTY	1,000 sq.m.	Residential Land	P 800,000.00
7. BATANGAS PROPERTY	107 sq.m.	Residential Lot	P 535,000.00
8. BACOLOD PROPERTY	200 sq.m.	Residential Lot	P 1,000,000.00
9. PANGASINAN PROPERTY	1,000 sq.m.	Residential Land	P 1,000,000.00

Conditions:
a. All taxes, transfer fees and other incidental expenses shall be for the account of the buyer;
b. Official bid forms, documentary requirements, instructions to bidders, and detailed terms and conditions of the sale are available at the Livelihood Corporation Head Office, 3rd Floor Corporate Plaza, 845 A. Arnaiz Ave., Legaspi Village, Makati City;
c. Bids must be submitted in the Office of the Chairman, LIVELIHOOD Bids and Awards Committee, attention to the BAC Secretariat not later than 2:00 P.M. of March 08, 2006;
d. The Livelihood Corporation reserves the right to reject any or all bids, to waive any formalities therein and to accept such bid as may be deemed advantageous to the Corporation.

A briefing for the Bidding Conference will be on February 24, 2006, 2:00 P.M. at the Office of the Administrator Conference Room, 3rd Floor Corporate Plaza, 845 A. Arnaiz Ave., Legaspi Village, Makati City.

For further inquiries, please call Mr. Eduardo P. Esperon, BAC Secretariat at tel. nos. 811-8170 Local no. 3321/3322/3324 or Mr. Virgilio Constantino, Jr., Division Chief, Credit Management and Management Support Unit, at tel # 8910-6126 or 8911-5171/8911-5172.

(Sgd.) ALEXIS A. SUMBA
Chairman, LIVELIHOOD Bids and Awards Committee

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INQUIRER Northern Luzon

Editor Jun Bandayrel
Assoc. Chief Rolando B. Fernandez

What now, Hacienda Luisita?

By Jo Maricar Cinconia
Hacienda Luisita, Tarlac City

IF THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRARIAN REFORM implements its five-month action plan, Hacienda Luisita in Tarlac City will finally be distributed to farmer-beneficiaries in May.

However, the Cojuangco family-owned sugar estate and its farmers, however, are afraid of stress that may take more than five months to resolve. Foremost of these concerns is the management's move to "exhaust all legal avenues" to stop the land reform.

"It is not as much as we don't want to give up the land. It is because this anniversary of the massacre should be upheld," said Jessy Bautista, vice president for corporate affairs of the hacienda's management firm, Jose Cojuangco & Sons.

Bautista was referring to the commemoration of agreements forged between Hacienda Luisita and the farmers in 1989 that amended terms of stock, instead of land, to the farmers under the stock distribution option (SDO) program.

The Presidential Agrarian Reform Council (PARC) amended the SDO in December last year, past halfway of a 30-year implementation period, it asked the DAR to redistribute the land to the beneficiaries.

Hacienda Luisita appealed the decision and asked the council to reconsider the SDO.

Last month, the farmers, through their lawyer Roman Capa-long, filed a motion opposing the appeal and asked the DAR to immediately implement the land reform. Citing the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Law (CARL), they said the decision of the council was immediately executory, regardless of pending legal motions.

Bautista said the council had no jurisdiction over the issues. The agreement entered into by the landowners and its farmers is a "perfected contract" that can be sealed only by the courts and not by an administrative body like the PARC, he argued.

The SDO, he said, had been ratified by the 2/3 of Hacienda Luisita's compliance with the CARL.

Noting the hardline stance taken by DAR on the issue, Bautista also said the hacienda had too option but to exhaust all legal avenues, such as filing the appeal and other cases before the Supreme Court or other judicial bodies.

Asked this legal tussle in Hacienda Is, how is Hacienda Luisita?

Volatile

Bautista said it was not likely to plant sugarcane now due to uncertainties. "The situation is volatile and it is not wise to plant and spend millions (of pesos) when we do not know what will happen."

Unfilled more troubled, the land will not be productive, he added.

Not quite, say the farmers.

Inspired by their impending ownership of the land and empowered by the victory they received from Hacienda Luisita as condition for settling the 11-month strike, members of the United Luisita Workers Union (Ulwu) are moving ahead to make the land useful.

In December last year, the union got P50 million worth of sugarcane in the fields as part of the entitlement package. The farmers, however, had to cut and haul the crops at their own expenses.

Last crops

Ulwu Jerry Bautista, of Barangay Magsalamohan, lamented that he and the other members could not get all the sugarcane as some people had burned certain sections of the fields. He said about 20,000 tons of sugarcane had been burned, 30,000 more were destroyed, and another 15,000 tons stolen.

Even then, the members managed harvesting the canes on their own and have so far earned about P9 million for the union.

Time Cruz, a union director, said female members were paid P150 for every ton of sugarcane that they cut, while male members received P200 per ton that they cut and haul.

Groups of 10 to 15 members had been formed to make work more efficient, Cruz said.

When the sugarcane is paid for by Hacienda Luisita, a certain amount is set aside for the union and the members are paid an average of P600 each. The amount is higher than their usual P194.50 daily rate with ECL, Cruz said.

Work loans

At Barangay Asturias, where 300 union members live, several families said they intended to make productive the 500 hectares of land they used to plant with sugarcane.

The area is good for sugarcane, palay and vegetables. Nats said 14 said the farmers planned to expand their field from the three hectares of land they originally planted with the crop during the strike.

With the money the union got from the sugarcane harvest, members have been encouraged to work in teams in the farms. Each group of 10 members will be assigned a loan-feature land and the union will pay for planting expenses that they will retain after harvest.

Cruz said the groups could choose what to plant since they know what was suitable in their area. This will also ensure that the land will not be idle while their farmers distrust and unable loan to meet with Hacienda Luisita, he said.

Contentious

Capulong said the three-way tentative terms that should be resolved deals with the actual land area for distribution, the list of beneficiaries, and land valuation.

He said the cash for 33 percent of the pie was now going on. Some people have already farmed off as much as 20 has of land, he said.

DAR officials agree that identifying farmer beneficiaries will be a tedious process. Alfredo Reyes, Tarlac agrarian reform affairs, said a team tasked with checking and cross-checking various records and validating them in the field had been formed.

While he promised to finish the team's work to meet the May target, Reyes said his office would exercise prudence and would be extra cautious in its work to identify the rightful beneficiaries.

Historical research

The DAR, however, said the tedious of documents, such as missing land titles and the checking of conflicting data entries were bottlenecks in their action plan, among other things.

Another team has been formed to research on the titling history of Hacienda Luisita, Reyes said.

In its application for agrarian reform coverage in 1987, Tarlac Governor Cojuangco, Tarlac's rebuilt owner Hacienda Luisita, identified only 4,915.75 has of the entire then 6,696 has it bought from the Spanish company Tabacalera in the 1950s.

But Capulong said the entire estate should be subjected to agrarian reform.

Proper accounting of what be described as the "missing 1,600 hectares" of land should be done because, he said, these were part of the original agricultural property.

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TOP PERFORMER AWARD
Bansi Shipping Services, Inc.
Bergesen D.Y. Philippines, Inc.
Bright Maritime Corporation
C.T. Group Phils., Inc.
Crewservice, Inc.
Doble-Philstan Manning Agency, Inc.
Hough Fleet Services Phils., Inc.
K.G.S. Fleet Management Manila, Inc.
Magsaysay Mitsui O.S.K. Marine, Inc.
Michaelmar Phils., Inc.
MST Marine Services (Phils.), Inc.
Nor Ship Management, Inc.
North Sea Marine Services Corp.
Oriental Shipping Int'l. Co., Inc.
OSM Maritime Services, Inc.
Pavola Maritime Agency Corp.
Seastar Crewing (Manila), Inc.
Southfield Agencies, Inc.
TSM Shipping (Phils.), Inc.
Ventis Maritime Corp.
Veritas Maritime Corp.

EXEMPLARY WELFARE PROGRAMS AND ALLIED SERVICES
Dolphin Ship Management, Inc.
Inso-Orient Maritime Enterprises, Inc.
Jebsens Maritime, Inc.
Magsaysay Maritime Corporation
NYK Fil-Ship Management, Inc.
Oriental Shipmanagement Company, Inc.
OSM Shipping Phils., Inc.
Seapower Shipping Enterprises, Inc.
United Philippine Lines, Inc.

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Leonis Navigation Company, Inc.
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NYK-Fil Ship Management, Inc.
Philippine Hanmarina Shipagency, Inc.

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Government Honors Outstanding Private Recruitment and Manning Agencies

2005 Agency Performance Awards

The Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) and the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA) conferred recognition honor on outstanding private recruitment companies through its Agency Performance Awards.

The Top Performer Award and the Excellence Award are given to recruitment and manning agencies in recognition of their exemplary performance in processing decent and quality overseas employment for Filipinos. The Award of Excellence is given to Consistent Top Performer Awardees for their industry leadership, foreign exchange earning contributions, social awareness and responsibility. Special citations are also being given to agencies for pioneering in new areas of deployment, those with strategic marketing and outreach efforts in the use of the electronic information system or the Internet.

Since its inception in 1986, the institutionalization of the POEA's awards and recognition program evolved into an annual employment celebration to cite for excellence in what have. The award night was held at the Manila Pavilion Hotel last January 31, 2006.

Government could cancel ABS-CBN license

First page A1

resignations to the commission and you could be accused of an impartial probe or investigation," he said.

Solis said he could not speculate at this time "what penalty would have to be imposed because we would have to study first the report, evaluate the evidences, and find out the gravity. It depends on the gravity of the offense."

Solis said that the NTC would also have to consider the "public interest" in deciding what penalty to impose on the network, saying that it is one of the biggest media outlets in the country.

"We have to take to consideration, also, public interest. This is a TV station which is one of the largest TV stations. In fact, [it] has nationwide coverage. We have to balance all these things," he said.

Only the Supreme Court

While under the administrative supervision of the Department of Transportation and Communication, it is independent as far as its regulatory functions are concerned and its decisions are appealable only and directly to the Supreme Court.

"All TV and radio stations get authorizations from us—whether it is a provisional authority, certificate of authority, or temporary permit—and all these authorizations carry with them certain responsibilities and duties," Solis said.

He said the commission would inquire whether ABS-CBN violated a 1965 NTC circular which requires TV networks "not to commit any act that would be detrimental to public health, public welfare or public safety."

"And there are also implementing rules of that circular which say that in special events like this, the organizer must make sure that it puts in place sufficient security measures and safeguards to protect the interest and safety of the public," Solis said.

He said that if it was determined that there was a violation of the circular, the parties would be called to a hearing and given due process.

"We will have to find out first the extent of culpability," Solis said. " It really depends on what is the culpability, what is the extent of participation of the parties complained of, including the network," he said.

Malacañang keeps distance

Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita said the government was not out on pursuing the cases against those who would be held liable for the incident.

"It would be pitiful if we do not pursue this case just because they think it's all part of politics or just because those who died or suffered injuries were poor in life and should just be forgotten," Ermita said.

The House of Representatives will conduct its own investigation into the tragedy.

Party-list Representatives Celspie Bebiano and Rafael Mariano of Anakpawis in a resolution called for a "more thorough" probe into the root causes of the stampede.

"This tragedy should compel the national government to reexamine its flawed and inhuman poverty alleviation programs that contribute to the neglect of the toiling masses," said Bebiano.

Representatives Salacnib Baterina and Antonio Custodio said the government must be dictated upon by emotions.

Bata Tanauanin Ampatuan, chair of the National Anti-Poverty Commission (NAPC), said one reason the people flocked to "Wowowee" was the "magnet of economic need."

One of those who died was Trinidad de la Rosa, a mother from Pagsanjan in South Cotabato. Income in her family had known she had gone to the game show.

Another fatality was Visitacion Ingonza, 54, a widow who had hoped that winning a major prize on the show would enable her to stop working as a housemaid in Metro Manila, return home to Isabela province and start a small business.

Argonza's son, Willie Boy, said her mother and two friends had gone to the show for the raffle but her companions left after an hour of queuing at the gate.

His mother chose to stay, ...and was trampled to death. With reports from Michael Lim Ubac, Hazel B. Macabasa and Edwin O. Fernandez, PDI Mindanao Bureau, Villamor Visaya Jr., PDI Northern Luzon Bureau and PDI Research

SOLID: There's no ban against the Lopezes.

Lawyers eye class suit

By Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

A GROUP OF LAWYERS TESTIFIED said they were ready to help the victims get justice, and that a class action suit could be one option.

Chel Diokno, director of the Volunteers Against Crime and Corruption said his group was gathering evidence and affidavits from the relatives of those who died and from those who were injured.

"A class suit will be more affordable than individual filing, especially because these people are very poor. Our lawyers will be providing legal assistance," Diokno said.

In a class action suit, the cases would be heard by just one court instead of by different courts, which would be the case if the relatives chose to file individual cases.

"We are still overlooking and building up information for a possible class suit," he said.

VACC chief legal counsel Pete Principe said the option of class action was "premature" for now.

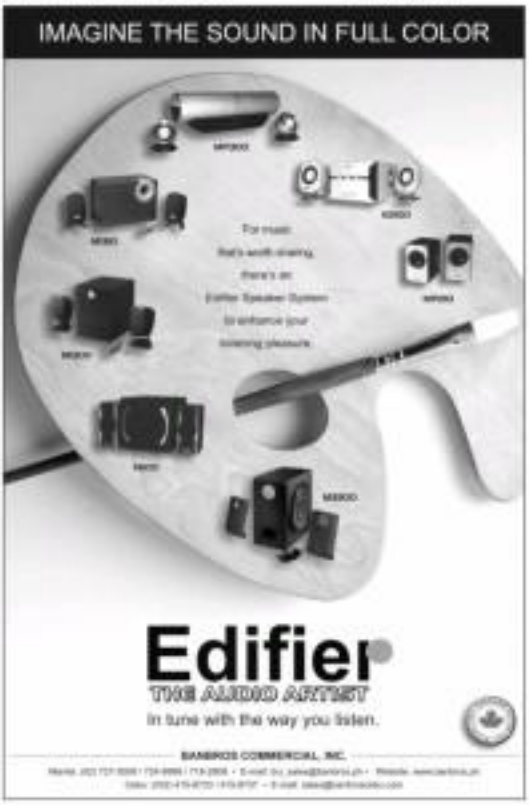
Principe urged the Senate to make the law harsher.

"There should be a heavier penalty," Principe said, adding that organizers of the event could be held liable for "reckless imprudence resulting in multiple homicide."

The offense is punishable by a fine (even imprisonment and a P10,000 fine.

Lawyers Leonard de Vera, Jovanie Fuyo and Jay de Guzman have also come forward to help.

VACC urged victims to call its hotline 892-7323 or 0916-680-2588 for enrollment.



Gabby outraged by opinion of probe chief

'Treated like animals'

From page A1

would be able to get in.

The pieces of information stopped up on Sunday to the fact-finding inquiry conducted by Task Force Ulira at the Quezon City office of the Department of Interior and Local Government.

The decision was made at a meeting of the "Wowowee" staff on Friday afternoon. That a total of P500,000 would be raffled off to 40 people in order to appease those who would not be accommodated inside the arena.

"So they (the people outside) won't feel bad—because they really came to the venue, some [staying] more than a day... we [decided to] give P5,000 to 40 winners," Marilou Diaz-Abaya, head of the ABS-CBN business unit, told the task force during the initial hearing on Sunday night.

Abaya also said the announcement would be made over the public address system starting at around 2 a.m. Saturday. She said the production staff had felt it was the right decision to speak candidly to the people about the arena's capacity of only 17,000.

"If we make them expect that they can all get in, the dynamics of the people there [may change]. the more they would try to get in," Abaya also said.

The information that not all could be accommodated inside the arena was disclosed to the people in front of the barricades, who had not fallen in line.

But it failed to produce the desired effect, Almaden said.

"There were cheers, but nobody moved. They would rather stay," she said.

Restless crowd

Almaden said the crowd started to get restless after midnight, with some trying to lunge over the barriers set up in front of the gates to St. Stanton's Street. "There were two violations to the show, one on St. Martin's flower and the other on Captain Javier Street, where the stampede took place."

"At that point...our concern was no more the show per se, because [because the children [were] already crying and cold women [were there]," she said.

Almaden said she spoke with a police officer, one Captain Asuela, at 6 a.m. Saturday.

She ignored the fate of her staff members as saying that Asuela was worried because the crowd was getting restless, and that he was sending in additional men.

Asked by a task force member if there were others by organizers and security officers to release pressure "from the back" of the crowd, Almaden said: "That was why when Captain Asuela came there and I was introduced to him, my very first words to him were 'Thank you.' It was repeated to me that he felt the crowd [was becoming] rowdy, and that he [had] sent [for more] people.

Another venue

"[Some were hoping that the [pre-film entertainment] would be done any time, before we open the gate or during the opening of the gate."

Almaden also told the task force that the production staff had aired to look for another venue, and considered the Araneta Coliseum in Cubao, Quezon City.

But another activity was scheduled that Friday at the coliseum, and there would have been no space to set up the network equipment for the "Wowowee" show the next day, she said.

Almaden said that as far as the latest ABS-CBN discussed with the management of the Philippine Arena was the possibility of allowing people into the football field, and not just the bleachers.

But Philippine officials were reluctant to grant this "It was part of the negotiations, sir, but Ultra had concerns [over] the new track ... Then said it was sorry," she said. Reporters from Marinel R. Cruz and Lolgie A. del Puerto

"I SAID FULL RESPONSIBILITY," ABS-CBN chairman Eugenio Lopez Jr. declares in a statement over the family-owned ABC cable network but taken exception to the report of Task Force Ulira.

From page A1

the preparations might be held liable.

"It is up to the Department of Justice to determine the identities of those who may have criminal liability based on the task force's findings," he said.

"No, I am not afraid of ABS-CBN. We just want to protect the reputation of those who may be unduly implicated," Tan said, when reporters raised the possible influence of the TV network over the task force.

Regis Puno is the legal counsel of ABS-CBN. His brother, lawyer Atty. Rosalio Puno, has just been appointed secretary of the Department of Interior and Local Government.

Owners' liability

At a news briefing where he received the task force's report, Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez said the civil liability could go as high as the owners of ABS-CBN.

"The employer always has liability to answer for damages," Gonzalez said.

Asked if this would include the Lopez family, which owns the network, he said: "Depending on the investigation, it can go as high as anybody."

Gonzalez further if he was not cowed by the prospect of going after one of the country's most influential families, Gonzalez said it would be "just unfortunate if [the case] lands on somebody's backyard."

"We will pursue it," he said.

ABS-CBN chair Eugenio Lopez III said days earlier he would hold "accountable" if the justice system came to that conclusion, his family was outraged as Cojuangco's statement that the crowd outside the Philippine Arena in Pasig City had been "treated like animals." (See story on Page A1.)

The early-morning stampede claimed 74 lives and injured about 500 people.

Earlier, Gonzalez tagged "Wowowee" host Willie Revillame as among those who could be charged with "reckless imprudence resulting in multiple homicide and multiple physical injuries."

He said the victims may also initiate action for civil damages.

Names

While Cojuangco did not name names, the task force's report showed that the last-ending hours had called ABS-CBN's head of security, the production-managers assistant location manager and television producer of "Wowowee," as well as "other ABS-CBN executives who may have been involved directly or indirectly with the preparation or planning of the event" as those responsible for the lack of contingency plans for the "extra 10,000 people."

The report identified the ABS-CBN security chief as Rene Lopez and the production manager as Marilou Almaden.

"Not having any contingency plans for the extra 10,000 people that the network expected to come because of its irresponsible and inexpert management of the situation at hand, is criminal negligence and endangerment leading to the loss of life at worst," the fact-finding team said.

It said ABS-CBN had expected a crowd of 10,000 but that the venue could only accommodate 17,000, or 20,000 at most.

No lessons learned

The fact-finding team gave a blow-point recommendation to prevent the occurrence of a similar incident.

Corpus said, however, that ABS-CBN appeared not to have learned anything about handling huge crowds.

"It seems that the organizers have yet to learn their lessons. On the two separate incidents [that] happened [only] the P4 concert in Manila last 2003 and the 'Magandang Tanghali Bayan' show [on] Jan. 19, 2006, inside the ABS-CBN compound itself, a similar stampede also transpired and there were injuries," he said, reading from the report.

He added: "It is this prior knowledge and experience of these incidents that should have prompted the head of security of the network to be more vigilant, more prepared and more aware of the possibilities that could transpire in such conditions where a tired, impatient and potentially violent crowd would open a venue.

"That past experience of ABS-CBN seems to not have taught the management ... any lesson."

Lack of coordination

The report also said there was "no obvious lack of coordination" between the organizers and relevant government agencies.

It said that while ABS-CBN had earlier sought the assistance of the officials of the mayor and chief of police of Pasig, "neither of this was invited to any of the organizers' pre-mortem meetings."

In a letter to Pasig Mayor Vicente Sandico on Jan. 17, "Wowowee" assistant location manager Boy Cayabyab promised to deploy 60 security guards, but also asked for the deployment of policemen, traffic enforcers and barangay watchmen to the area.

Cayabyab said that the mayor handle the peace and order situation."Cayabyab said in his letter.

But the report said: "Neither office was made aware of the possible implications of the venue not having enough capacity to accommodate the possible attendees, his coordination meeting with the various government agencies was conducted," it said.

Possible trigger

As to the question of what exactly triggered the deadly stampede, the report said that based on the accounts of survivors, "the point of ons quoted circumstance" was "the point where an ABS-CBN staff [member] named Shiel Feliciano announced to the crowd gathered in the Lower Bitgilds Passage (LBP) gate that the first 300 people in line beneath the covered walkway along Capitols Javier Street would be chosen to participate in the 'Pera-o-Bayong' portion" of the show.

It added: "The hotline excited the crowd by saying that those 300 people would have the chance to win prizes ranging from P10,000 to P50,000 up to P500,000.

"The announcement subsequently incited the people who were outside the official queue ... to push their way into the already jampacked queue, hoping that they could squeeze in among the first 300...

"At this point, the network's staff closed the gates, hoping to control the sudden deluge of people clamoring to be the first 300 in line...

"Whether by the pressure exerted on the gate itself or whether the guards finally relented to open the gate again, when the gates were finally open, the crowd surged forward with tremendous speed and force.

"Coupled with the steep decline and the access restriction at the lower level in the LBP gate, which is reportedly used only for vehicular traffic), this eventually caused those in front of the escalating rush to stumble and fall, [which] culminated in the stampede that caused the majority of the deaths and injuries."

No contingency measures

Corpus said the deaths and injuries could have been fewer had contingency measures been in place.

He said ambulances were at the scene, but since there were no contingency measures, producers may manager Almaden said "We call [emergency] hotline [it] could call the emergency units."

"That's a crucial delay," Corpus said. "[The delay] was for several minutes. In an emergency, every minute counts."

The report quoted Lopez as saying that the security personnel were concentrated at the biggest St. Martin Gate.

"Hence, per [his] testimony, he allocated 77 out of his total force of 144 security personnel at the location. This left him with only 12 of his security personnel to man the entrance at the LBP gate," the report said.

The report said that Lopez and Almaden were at the St. Martin Gate.

"With both lead officers and the show's production manager at the St. Martin Gate, this ultimately meant that only junior officers, if any, were probably manning the other gate," it said.

'Guests at a party'

The report said that with the people swelling to the tens of thousands, the organizers should have provided the necessary facilities.

It said some of those in line should have earlier been allowed into the venue.

And having been told that the Philippine officials would not allow the people into the track area, the organizers should have looked for other ways to accommodate the swelling crowd, the report said.

It added: "One simple door set inside 500 guests to his/her birthday party or wedding reception knowing fully well that [the] venue of choice can only accommodate half of the number." With a report from Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

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INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The Land Bank of the Philippines invites suppliers/contractors/consultants to apply for eligibility and to bid for the projects as stated below:

P.R.No.	Item/Description	Approved Budget	Source of Funds
2005-11-035	CDR with Document Scanner with Bundled Software and PC	P 35,000,000.00	LBP Funds
2006-008	1 lot Supply of Terminal Supervisor, Letter Materials, Tools and Equipment for the rehabilitation of the ventilation system of the Overpass Treadmill Plank (OTP) and installing of the OTP complete with supply of labor and material installation for one (1) year.	4,500,000.00	LBP Funds

Prospective bidders should have experience in undertaking a similar project within the last two (2) years with an amount of at least 50% of the proposed project for bidding. The Eligibility Check/Pre-Qualification as well as the Preliminary Examination of Bids shall use non-discretionary "pass/fail" criteria. Post-qualification of the lowest calculated bid shall be conducted.

Bidding for the above-requirements are scheduled on February 22, 2006 at 1:30 PM and February 23, 2006 at 1:30 PM respectively. Bid Documents may be obtained from the General Services Department, 25th Floor, LANDBANK Plaza, Ali H. dela Rosa corner Dr. Quintos Streets, Malate, Manila, upon payment of a non-refundable fee of P1,000.00 and P1,000.00 for P.R. Nos. 2005-312-D and 2006-008, respectively.

Interested suppliers are requested to attend the Pre-Bid Conference scheduled on February 10, 2006 at the 25th Floor, Conference Room, LANDBANK Plaza, Manila, thereby.

All bids must conform to Eligibility Statement and Screening, Bid Security, Performance Security, Pre-Bidding Conference, Evaluation of Bids, Post Qualification and Award of Contract shall be governed by the pertinent provisions of RA 9184 and its Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR).

LANDBANK reserves the right to reject any or all bids, to declare the bidding a failure or waive any requirement for lawful reason and to cause an award to the bidder who applied to most advantageous to the Bank.

COMMITTEE ON BIDS AND AWARDS

Do you know who Sr. Ping Ocariaz was standing between the people and the tanks on EDSA on Feb. 23, 1986?

EDSA 20 A PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER VIDEO DOCUMENTARY FEBRUARY 25, MONDAY 8:10 PM ABC

Manila girds for safe kissfest

MSG. GEN. Rolando Mile offers the American flag to Apple, wife of Filipino-American pilot Roel Garcia, who was killed in combat in Iraq last month.

By Tina G. Santos and Jocelyn R. Uy

WAGING TO AVOID A REPEAT OF THE Saturday stampede at the Philippine Arena (formerly Ciluca) which claimed 74 lives, organizers of a kissing festival met with National Capital Region Police Office chief Director Vidal Querol yesterday to map out security measures.

Tens of thousands of couples are expected to troop to Roxas Boulevard this coming Saturday for the 3rd Lovapalooza, an outdoor event where they will kiss for about 10 seconds in celebration of Valentine's Day.

"We talked about the exercise and crowd control management and brainstormed on how we could cope with untoward incidents that might arise during the event," Querol said over the phone yesterday.

He added that about 10,000-500 policemen will be deployed along the boulevard, along with bomb-sniffing dogs, canine marshals, detectives and crowd control personnel to secure those attending the event.

"One thing good about it is that they already held two Lovapalooza events in the past and they were all very successful," Querol said. He noted that the event would be held outdoors with no entrance points. "So tickets will be issued and there are no gates where crowds can converge in big numbers," he added. The Manila City government also noted that the Manila Police District to deploy 1,000 policemen to patrol the crowd along the boulevard, including the Rajah Sulayman Park, which will be the center of the celebration.

"We were specifically directed to intensify security measures by deploying more security officers, even exceeding the number of council personnel we had provided during the previous years when the city hosted the same event," said Lovepal Mendiola of the Roxas, Soyuyan and Calderon Affairs Bureau.

"The film champion down but and should see prevent the city from hosting events where a huge crowd is expected. Sure, it gives us headaches but it was all worth it. We just have to be careful and implement preemptive and preventive measures," Mayor Lito Atienza said.

More than 5,000 couples smooched for 10 seconds for the Lovapalooza two years ago, placing the country in the Guinness Book of World Records for the most number of couples that kissed at the same time.

"This year, it's no longer aimed at setting a record. We would like to gather couples to show their affection on Valentine's Day," added Atienza. The Western District Traffic Enforcement Office will divert traffic from several portions of Roxas Boulevard for Sunday's event.

Meanwhile, the Pasig City government said it will be stricter in issuing permits to big events in the city after the Ciluca stampede.

"We will issue permits only if those requesting it will provide us with a detailed security plan. There should be crowd control and security personnel to control the crowd," said Pasig City Mayor Vicente Eusebio. Though his office stood a permit for the event, Eusebio blamed the show's organizers, saying the security they provided was not enough. With Aileen C. Rivadeo Jr.

White roses rain at pilot's burial in Valenzuela City

By Mercy C. Cervajal

A FILIPINO-AMERICAN U.S. ARMY pilot whose plane was shot down in Iraq was buried yesterday in Valenzuela City with full military honors.

Sgt. Chief Warrant Officer Roel Garcia, 34, of Baltimore, Hawaii, was laid to rest at the Polo Memorial Park, a helicopter dropped white rose petals and leaves on the cemetery's sinking floor, his wife Apple, his father Benedicto, and mother Cecilia.

Also present were US Embassy Charge d'Affaires Paul Jones and Brig. Gen. Richard Wills, commanding general of the US military's special operations command in Korea, Garcia's former commander.

Garcia was killed on Jan. 14 when Iraqi insurgents shot down his AH-64 Apache helicopter in Taji, Iraq. He was assigned to the 4th Infantry Division based in Fort Hood, Texas.

He received posthumously the Bronze Star, the Purple Heart, US military award for gallantry in action, as well as the Purple Heart and the Air Medal.

Garcia was born in Olongapo, Bataan on Aug. 29, 1971. He graduated with a degree in electronic engineering before moving to the US in 1987. He entered the US Air Force in 1992, where he served for four years and then enlisted in the Army to attend helicopter flight school. With Lirmelie Reyes, PIA Central Luzon Desk

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Alabastro lecture at UE

DR. EDITHA J. V. Alabastro, secretary of the Department of Science and Technology (DOST), will deliver the "Key Vision and Plans of the DOST" at 10 a.m. today at the conference hall of the University of the Last Manila campus. Alabastro, a registered chemical engineer and career executive service officer, was appointed as DOST secretary on March 2005 and was reappointed on May 30, 2006. She is the first woman to get the DOST portfolio. Her previous designations include being the department's assistant secretary for research and development, executive director of the Philippine Council for Industry and Energy Research and Development, chair of the National Committee on Chemistry of the Philippines, chair of the Asean Committee on Science and Technology, and project director of the ILIG (Food Industry Linked Engineering and Science Education Project. Alabastro's lecture is one of many activities lined up by UE in celebration of its 60th founding anniversary, which will culminate in September. For more information, call 736-0477 local 160 or 736-0502, or visit www.ue.edu.ph

Laoag's 10th PAMULINAWEN FESTIVAL

marks a season of harvest

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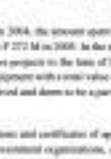

Warm Greetings!

PARAMBAK ITI PARAGOR, CELEBRATING A SEASON OF HARVEST!

With the theme of the Pamulinawen Festival Year X, we focus on the good times and the gifts that the Almighty has so graciously bestowed upon our city. Admittedly, there were hard times, but all things considered, I honestly believe that Laoag City has been blessed.

The city budget is an indication of this blessing. In 2004, the amount spent for the benefit of Laoagueños was P 242 M. This increased to P 272 M in 2005. In the ensuing year, this is projected to reach P 304 M. Infrastructure projects to the tune of P 48 M were carried out last year. Several heavy and light equipment with a total value of P 33 M were also purchased. All these are thankfully received and deem to be a part of our blessings.

Equally significant are the countless awards, citations and certificates of appreciation received from various government and non-government organizations, such as the Department of Tourism as one of the BEST TOURIST DESTINATIONS and, the National Police Commission as one of the MOST PEACEFUL AND ORDERLY CITIES IN THE PHILIPPINES. The ALIWAN FIESTA GRAND NATIONAL FLOAT COMPETITION AWARD, the CHAMPIONSHIPS in the TRAVEL MART BEST BOOTH COMPETITION, and the CHRISTMASTERPIECE BAYANIHAN SILVER AWARD in Ciudad Fiesta of the office bearers.

Even your humble servant had his share of blessings. He has been conferred with the 2005 APOLINARIO MABINI AWARD for the LOCAL GOVERNMENT UNIT OF THE YEAR and the BEST LOCAL CHIEF EXECUTIVE AWARD conferred by the Philippine National Police, Bureau of Jail Management and Penology and the Bureau of Fire Protection during their Annual Recognition Day. He also has the distinction of being the only City Mayor from the Philippines to speak at the World Cities Summit on Service Industries held in Wuxi, China.

For all these blessings, we are truly grateful to God and to our patron saint, St. William the Hermit, for His intercession on our behalf. We therefore dedicate this celebration of thanksgiving to them even as we pray for more blessings to come.

To all of you, my fellow Laoagueños and our esteemed guests, let us all join hands not only in these celebrations but, perhaps more important, in working together, along with our Creator and St. William, to make our aspirations and dreams come true. Together, let us MAKE IT HAPPEN!

HAPPY FIESTA!

Michael V. Farñas
City Mayor

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NEW!

Jeepneys to cut fares by ₱.50 starting Feb. 10

By Clarissa S. Batino

SOME 40,000 JEEPNEYS IN METRO MANILA will cut fares by 50 centavos from Feb. 10 to 17 to offer the public some form of relief amid increasing commodity prices, according to transport groups and the Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board (LTFRB).

From Friday this week to Friday next week, commuters will only pay a minimum jeepney fare of P7 instead of P7.50.

The temporary fare cut is a special feature in the celebrations of the first-ever Jeepney Week in Metro Manila.

The 50-centavo fare cut may become permanent in March if diesel price stabilizes or almost P32 a liter, said LTFRB Chair Alberto Lim in Manila.

But jeepney groups said that if diesel prices hit P33 a liter, they may ask for a P1 or P1.50 increase in minimum fares.

Extension

Vigor Mendoza, spokesperson and lawyer for the transport groups, said the temporary discount would be extended but it would depend on whether oil companies would give discounts or at least hold off any price hike in diesel.

"We were informed that oil companies may raise diesel prices by P1.6 liter in the coming weeks due to increasing world oil prices," said Mendoza. "If this happens, the transport groups would have to act."

Soriano said the price of diesel would go up anew by 30 centavos at the close of the week.

New prices

By March, however, oil prices are expected to go down and the price of diesel would settle at the P32 a liter level.

Soriano said she had asked transport groups if they could help ease the burden of the riding public, considering that when the LTFRB approved fare increases in June 2003, the jeep and buses, the threshold rate for diesel was P34 a liter.

Minimum fare

In June last year, jeeps and buses in Metro Manila raised their minimum fare by P1. Jeeps now charge P7.50 for the first four kilometers and P1.25 for every additional kilometer.

Here buses collect P8 for the first five kilometers plus P1.75 for every additional km.

The price of diesel was about P26 a liter when the P2 fare hike was approved last year.

The fuel now used by many in the public transport sector costs more than P32 a liter.

Participants

Jeepney groups that will participate in the fare discount are the Federation of Drivers and Jeepney Operators of the Philippines at Bulacan, the Malate Jeepney Operators and Drivers Association (Mjoda), and the Alliance of Transport Operators and Drivers Associations of the Philippines at Bicutan, and Pasong Tamo.

The Pinagkaisang Samahan ng Tsuper at Operator Nationalist (Piston) did not sign the statement issued jointly by the jeepney groups.

However, sources said its members would also give out discounts.

Only one

Soriano said of the transport groups, only the jeepneys responded to the government's request for a fare cut.

Mendoza said that every fare increase in diesel from P26 a liter means losses of P30 a day for public utility vehicle drivers and operators.

"If ever, we want any fare hike increase to happen during the summer so that the public can adjust to the new fares," said the lawyer.

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Hotheaded cop lands in jail

By Margaux C. Ortiz

A POLICEMAN SPENT HIS 27TH BIRTHDAY in jail yesterday after he killed a man during a traffic dispute in Tondo, Manila.

Police arrested PO2 Joel Peleyo, of the Manila Police District (MPD) after he shot Reyan Cruz, 23, of 2664 Juan Luna St., Tondo on Monday.

SPO4 Dandeng Vidad of the MPD Homicide Section said that Peleyo was driving his scooter at around 3:15 p.m. on Monday when he got caught in a traffic jam on Juan Luna St.

A heated argument took place when Cruz, who was riding a bicycle, tried to overtake Peleyo, according to Vidad.

Grievous

The two traded blows but the fight ended when the policeman took out an unlicensed .45 caliber pistol and shot the victim four times, Vidad added.

Cruz was rushed to the Gonzalo Macapagal Memorial Medical Center in Caloocan City where he was declared dead on arrival.

Policemen assigned at the precinct located near the crime scene immediately arrested the suspect.

Peleyo was brought later to the MPD headquarters for questioning.

Vidad said they would be filing charges of murder and illegal possession of a firearm against the policeman.

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Giants, Bulls begin Finals showdown

GREGORIO
'We're the underdogs

By Jane Meneses

THE BATTLE FOR THE TOP PRIZE SHOULD provide enough of a motivation. Still, both Purefoods and Red Bull are snatching inspiration from everywhere they can.

From pre-championship statements to head-to-head records to underdog labels, the Giants and the Bulls are multiplying on motivation as they go into Game 1 of the San Miguel PBA Phone Conference championship series today at the Araneta Coliseum.

The Giants are the pre-**Jubilee underdogs in the** best-of-seven series, somehow validating Red Bull general Jerry Tagaro's indirect declaration that the Bulls will go into the series as the favorites.

"We're definitely the underdogs and we are taking to heart what Tagaro had said that influence wins in the Giantso-Red Bull series, but an advantage," said Purefoods coach Ryan Gregorio of his second championship stint after capturing the 2002 Commission Cup with the Giants.

To an eye whom the underdog label is a sought after commodity during **pressure-packed situations, it was** refreshing for coach Ong Guino to **concede the label to Purefoods and** not attract any part of Tagaro's statements.

The Bulls, after all, have enough motivations to fire them up.

Swept by the Giants in the elimination round, the Bulldozer making a 6-2 record against the Giants, their inspiration.

"If the underdog tag and what

QUIANO. Our new surfer looms as Purefoods could moderate as.

Lordy had said might motivate them to play better, maybe our own home in Pembrook could work the same for us," said Guino.

Tagaro also has a personal motivation. After emerging as one of the heroes of Red Bull's conquest of the popular Giants to equal in the semifinals, several unidentified Bingo-Bingo

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Everest 4x2 AT Leather Seats	P1,790,000		P156,000	P48,000	P35,000	P26,000

Giants, Bulls collide tonight

Powerpuff girl turned hot stuff

Pacquiao, Fenalti guest

UAAP board tackles DLSU pullout plan

By Jeannie W. Paye

WILL LA SALLE'S PLANNED PULLOUT FOIL UAAP?

Konica Minolta Nat'l Pro-Am fires off today

By Joey Arcano

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ABS-CBN game of chance a game of death

BARE EYE
Butch Trinidad

Still no word on TNT coach

IN HUDDLE

Keith Cellis

AS I STATED AT the calendar year, I realized that Shell barely had a week to finalize the role of its PBA franchise as Ginebra. If the transfer is not completed by noontime of Feb. 15, which is the cutoff date for the sale, Shell forfeits its franchise.

Having this in mind, I immediately texted both Bobby Ramos of Shell and Raymond Yu of Welcoat for an update.

The good news: Shell will not be forfeiting its franchise and the PBA will definitely have a 12th team next season.

"We have finally come to an agreement. We have shaken hands, so to speak," said former Shell governor Bobby Ramos who urged me to call Raymond Yuso Tony Que, the new owners of the franchise, for the formal declaration.

Which, Raymond couldn't give because he said it should come from the PBA commissioner.

"Wind po kayo yan. Now that the sale has been completed, the next step is for the PBA board to formally approve the transfer," Raymond said.

By way of welcoming the new team although unofficially, the PBA board framed a handsome fee them at the Business Palace of the Edsa Shangri-La Hotel two Mondays ago.

***

Almost everyone is smelling with heated breath the return of Jimmy Mariano's Talk 'N Text rebuilt more than nearly this week.

Apparently TNT management is having a very tough time choosing who will replace Joel Banal as head coach of the Phone Pals—Chot Reyes or Derrick Pumaren. The shooter has been narrowed down to the two, according to TNT governor and PBA executive Ricky Vargas.

From what I gathered, Ricky had a long meeting with Derrick late yesterday afternoon. Derrick returned from a Hong Kong vacation with his family last Monday night.

***

For this interesting note from Nat Inigo, former Manila Chronicle sportswriter now based in the US who recently bumped into Sonny Dolasco, father of golfer Dorothy, at the Mobile Field Golf Course clubhouse in Mountain View.

"Sonny was dismayed because Dorothy refused to let him come to Kuwait to help her record her swing for the Feb. 16-19 HSBC Opens to be held at Turtle Bay in Oahu, Hawaii," Nat related.

"Sonny said Dorothy was having problems with her right wrist. He had offered his expertise to help her change her swing but she turned it down. He said it was a big "No-No!" response he got when he called her."

Nat said Sonny was with Dorothy's younger brother Bombay, whom he described as "a tall, lanky boxer who has shown a lot of promise in golf."

According to Nat, Dorothy is set to compete in a San Francisco City tournament next month. Sonny, he said, is now concentrating on that young lad, hoping to mold him into another world golfer like his sister.

"Dorothy is now 40th in the money list, earning a respectable $200,606 last year. Jennifer Rosales is 20th with $53 k, 27th by the way, and there's room for many Asian or PGA members, especially Al Mendoza," Nat said.

***

HOOPVINE: Now I finally have something to say to radio listeners who have been asking if it's true that the PBA player had been gifted with a new sapphire for any car by his wealthy celebrity sweetheart. Well I got it from a good source that the player did get a BMW but that he never got to drive it because he sold the car immediately upon receipt. My source said he needed the cash for the house he is building. "Hindi naman nagalit yung girl. Ok lang," my source said.

For Steelers, the hard way is the right path to glory

DETROIT—THE PITTSBURGH STEELERS owned the easy road to the Super Bowl all those years they squandered home-field advantage, all those years coach Bill Cowher's teams couldn't stand up to the pressure, the moment, the challenge.

Maybe this is what was needed to bring me the best to ensure the often soul-sucking NFL title, but never played like it when it counted most. The toughest road to a Super Bowl championship.

So many had seen this overall playoff game and once the Super Bowl, much hoo-ha hosting the way three teams to its conference and also been home the opposing conference. Making the challenge even greater, the Steelers had to win their final four regular-season games just to reach the playoffs.

"It feels so much better to do something people say you can't do," linebacker Joey Porter said after the Steelers won their first Super Bowl in 26 years by beating the Seattle Seahawks 21-10 on Sunday. "There's no better feeling than that. We will always be remembered for the way we did it."

After going from a 15-1 record a year ago to an underachieving 11-5 during a regular season marked by injuries—quarterback Ben Roethlisberger was one four weeks with one knee problem—and a three-game losing streak, the Steelers by a comet's swath of highlighter tore a road to world championship.

By doing so, those four AFC championship games Steve said was Super Bowl before their victory 1995 finally began to fade into the past, along with the perception the Steelers and Dan coach couldn't win the big one.

"We had a chance to make history, and for me—I wanted one more," owner Jeff Lastings said. AP

LEBRON James highlights his heroics with a slam dunk. AP

James lifts Cavaliers

CLEVELAND—LEBRON JAMES SCORED 32 points, including a go-ahead layup in the final seconds, to lead the injury-depleted Cleveland Cavaliers over the Milwaukee Bucks, 89-86, in the NBA on Monday.

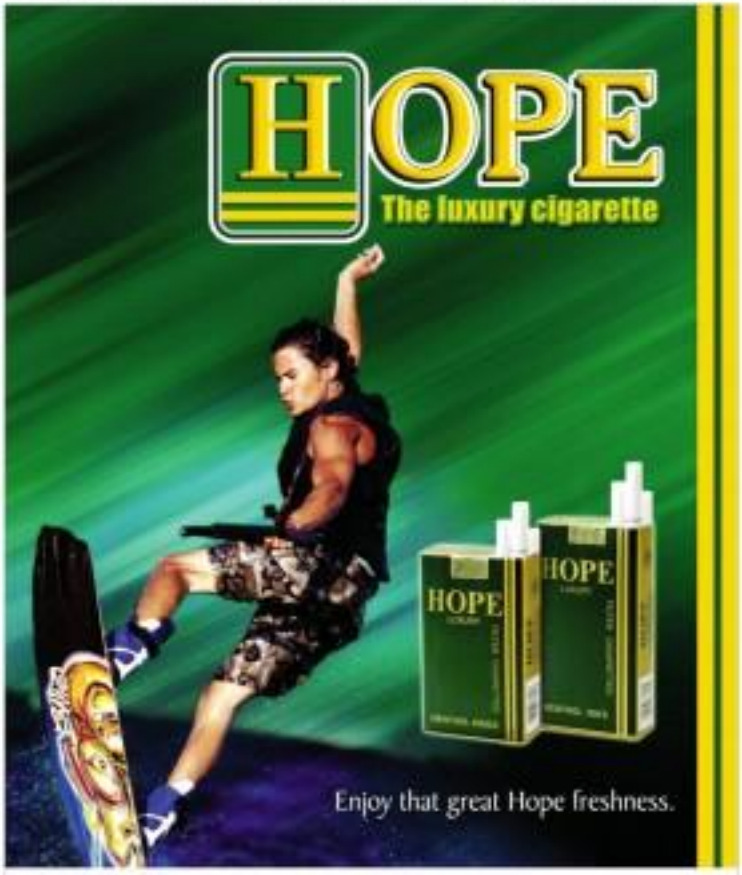
James added 12 assists and nine rebounds as he nearly completed his fourth triple-double of the season, but it was his powerful move to the basket that gave Cleveland an 87-86 lead and enabled the Cavaliers to break a four-game losing streak.

"I knew I had to be aggressive," said James. "That was an important game. What's awesome is that we were the underdogs and have done a great job in our division."

Simmons scored 23 points to lead Milwaukee, which has lost five of eight including four in a row on the road.

Starting guard Michael Redd scored only 10 points, seven under his average, but came alive in the final two minutes to spark Milwaukee.

Redd was called for an offensive foul after he ran into Anderson Varejao with 11.0 left, and didn't agree with the call. AP



'Kalikasan' races kick off Saturday

RUNNING RUNS CONVERGE AT THE QUEZON Greathlond on Saturday for the staging of the 2006 Globe Tales Fun-a-Kilometer.

Now on its seventh year, the fun race offers P75,000 in cash prizes, as well as trophies and medals to the top finishers in the 3K, 5K and 10K events. Top finishers in the men's and women's division of the 5K and 10K races will also go home with a pair of Nike shoes.

Proceeds of the marathon will go to the rehabilitation of the La Mesa Watershed.

Gas President/Soft Dr Gastro has been invited to flag the starting gun for the 10K race at 6 a.m. while CNN president Lourdes F. dispatches will send off the 3K runners while chief correspondent Korina Sanchez will start the 5K run.

Race director Rudy Biscocho said more than 1,500 have already enlisted for the event. Registration ends on Wednesday at the Vargas World Plaza Bldg. on Annapolis Street in Greenhills.

S. Mindanao wrests early Prisaa lead

LINGAYEN, PANGASINAN—MARILLEN ORACION crowned himself the fastest man and Janice Sinco the fastest woman as they propelled Southern Mindanao to the top of the 2006 Private Schools Sports Athletic Association (Prisaa) National Games at the Narciso Ramos Sports and Civic Center here yesterday.

Counting the twin victories of Edward Bueno and Shiela Grace Bradshaw in the men's and women's shot put and Adelfyn Macadat's triumph in the 1,500-meter run, Southern Mindanao started the gold-medals affair 11 crowns.

Oracion topped the men's 100-meter dash with a time of 10.8 seconds while Sinco ruled the women's division in 12.5 seconds. She was favored the true ball a distance of 12.98m while Bradshaw skored 10.34m. Rhondin finished 9.90.01.

Southern Tagalog was at second with three golds, courtesy of Bello Tolat in men's high jump, Rayne Maala in women's high jump and dispin Imbase in men's 1,500-meter.

Traditional powerhouse Western Visayas was third with two gold medals from swimmers Dalbert Gallos in the men's 100-meter freestyle and Kimbie Calzado in the women's 200-meter freestyle.

Central Visayas' Marlon Geis clocked 1.34.95 in topping the men's 1,500-meter run.

The three regions, which is hosting the event for the first time, has yet to join the medal board.

Southern Mindanao also took two silvers through Philip Cleto in the men's 1,500-meter and Darryl Calmoro (men's shot put).

In groundwar yesterday, Southern Tagalog bets have surged ahead with 13 gold, 7 silver and 1 bronze medals.

Meanwhile, Dr. Gonzalo Duque, Prisaa national president, said the more than 3,000 athletes would join a version of the "bayani festival" date would be staged by the city government on Wednesday night.

Duque said each player would be given a bangus and a kaing that they would gift at the city plaza.

"This will be the first time that a food festival will be participated in by representatives from all regions of the country," said Duque. Rabasa de Santa-Fuertes, PSE Northern Luzon Bureau.

TEAMWORK! Up-n-outside each other in the elimination round of the 110-meter hurdles for men.

Imus five Tangkad Sagad leg winner

IMUS PILOT SCHOOL BEATED Dasmarinas Elementary School, 17-13, to top the Metro Manila South Zone of the Quezkor Tangkad Sagad Basketball Tournament over the weekend at the San Beda Alabang gym.

The Imus Pilot squad of head coach Arnold Nepomuceno and assistant coach Ramon Yabut earned the second ticket to the National Finals to be held at the Festival Mall in Alabang on March 11.

Imus Pilot had earlier turned back Kaypian Rd. 53-20, while Dasmarinas Int. topped Feeb 51, 12-10, in the semifinals of the event supported by Alaska.

Cluster product manager Ian Montano, basketball director Leonardo "Ace" Avelino and organizer Bernard Ocampo agreed that Imus Pilot would give first leg winner San Beda-Manila a tough time in the finals.

Red Lions, Tams blast HAIL rivals

IAS MEA AND IBA EASTERN University notched contrasting victories over the weekend as the re-emergence of the Home and Away International League (HAIL).

The San Beda Red Lions nipped University of Sto. Tomas, 73-70, while the 1982 Tamaraw bounced Emilio Aguinaldo College, 82-69, to keep their title hopes alive in the season's only home-and-away collegiate contest.

Samuel Dyke, the Lions' biggest man on the floor, and guard John Sandral combined for 35 points to hand the Lions their third victory in as many games.

Dyke had 18 and Sandral added seven for Sandbeda, which trailed by three, 53-56, at the end of the third quarter. The ball ended tied at 55.

Jojo Duncil led the Growling Tigers with 16.

Jonas Villanueva exploded for 27 points, 16 coming in the second, while Mac Baguion and Marlon Maliksi had 13 apiece as FEU rolled to its second victory in three games in the event supported by Adidas, the official outfitter and basket, the official sports drink.

The tournament remains even-par with another four games left in both men's and women's divisions.

In females will host San Beda, 1:00 p.m. at home against La Salle, Lyceum will visit FEU and Ateneo hosts Uni. Astro. Women's matches will be played at 2 p.m., while the men's action starts at 4 p.m.

PETAON CHAMPS. Janoren Lanuevo gets a congratulatory kiss from Mark Lord, general manager of event host Clearwater Country Club in Clark Field, Pampanga, after her partnership with sister Jennifer bagged the crown in the Petron Ladies Beach Volleyball Championship over the weekend. The Lanuevos secured a berth in the Petron grand finals on June this year in Manila.

SPORTSWATCH

RP riders back in groove

MALAYSIA—ALBERT PERMEJO AND MICHAEL ED Ramos is of Pagcor Casino Filamcymbing squad, aimed to help them modernize and bring up Team Philippines to the level of Legaspi and Rosalio Munoz Jr. Ramos won gold in the 10-kilometer cup A of the Asian category while Tolentino placed 4th in the 10-kilometer cup B. Permejo and Ramos competed with the men's squad, 1.66.144 meters behind Mohd Sabirin Mohd Salleh and Mohd Sharizal Ismail.

Las Pinas derby today

LEADERS AND SECTIONS FROM CAVITE AND Batangas battle their counterparts from Metro Manila in today's Black Series 4 Cock Derby at the Las Pinas Coliseum. Action starts at 1:00 p.m. with 16 matches lined up. Today's host is noted breeder Jose Dino who is known for his Lemon Roundheads and Kelso fighters. According to Dino, the cash prize of derby is P200,000 for an entry fee of P8,000. Entries will be accepted until 10 a.m. and interested cockers may call 854-3810 or 825-1040 for inquiries.

17 fights in Makati 3-cocker

MACHETE TOSS COCK DERBY KICKS OFF tonight at the Makati Coliseum with 17 fights on the menu. Derby regulars from the Pasay Cockpit, Bulacan, Sto. Nio, Dasmarinas, Cavite, Cavite Coliseum, Pateros and the Pasig Staten Coliseum will be in action in the three-day derby. Today's host is noted breeder Jose Dino who is known for his Lemon Roundheads and Kelso fighters. According to Dino, the cash prize of derby is P200,000 for an entry fee of P8,000. Entries will be accepted until 10 a.m. and interested cockers may call 854-3810 or 825-1040 for inquiries.

Paragua Big Event finals on

EASY WIN TO MAKE ON TAY TONGA IS IN THE MAKING against Ivan B. Dalupan of the San Juan Cockers. Dino Paragua of Tagbilaran fell to the ropes to lead the qualifiers after scoring four victories in Monday's eliminations of the derby hosted by Bagumbayan Cockpit. Other striking balance with three wins each are Al Ireland Gin, Thad Delgado, Ariel Hofilena Jr. and Lito Constantino. As of Dinah, 2,045 Super Pacman Conference 2000 of Dominguez Mansy Pangalan and Patrick Antonio, ICC Lemon of Bay de Rosa Ana and Mohamed Ilao Tony Mercado. If PR BP Emanuel Gumpisan of Jay Suarez.

Spring cagers down Koreans as Nat'l Interclub gets going

MENRO CRUMBLED

OLSA Open champion Spring Cooking Oil showed no much class in demolishing Chosun Club of Korea, 87-75, at the start of the 2006 National Interclub Basketball Championship at the Rizal Coliseum.

Led by veterans MC Cuntapay and Mario Reyes, the Cooking Oil Masters of national shooting champion Nathaniel "Tac" Padilla dominated the game from start to finish in beating the Koreans and setting scenes of their title aspirations in the five-team tournament organized by the Basketball Association of the Philippines (BAP).

Cuntapay finished 19 points, while Reyes added 11 points for Spring, which led by as many as 22 points, 71-49, after only three quarters.

Larry Rodriguez, Melvin Hontiveros, Rodel Manuel and Emery Capobres scored ten points or more to underscore Spring's balanced offensive.

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ENTERTAINMENT

From hotel bed to 'papag' and 'banig'

PBB celebrity housemates desert pampered lives—but for how long?

By Mitz Valera

BEFORE THEY EXPERIENCE what would be their "back-to-basics" address for 40 days, participants in the reality TV show "Pinoy Big Brother Celebrity Edition" stayed in a hotel—each in his/her own room.

On Sunday night, where it was time for them to be introduced to the public, the 14 new housemates, including RK sleaze Ray Rubiko—who was almost "evicted" even before he could enter the Big Brother's house because of a glitch in his contract—were blindfolded, bound, and escorted by uniformed guards from the Grand Boulevard Hotel on Roxas Boulevard to awaiting cars outside.

A short ride brought the group to the Amore and Kerry Clubs, where they boarded a yacht. After a while, they were stripped of hoods and blindfolds and transported by speed boat to Bayside Manila on Roxas Boulevard, where the launch would be held and relieved his lover MH+CBH].

As they went missing, the celebrity participants were escorted by PBB's first-season [illegible]

First to go up was Rudy Fernandez, called the Man of Steel of this because of his mechanical right leg. His housemate Jessy Isaiah accompanied him.

Fernandez, 58, a triathlon athlete, is a work that apparently established his excellence in athletics despite his handicap. His three sons, Ignie, Ivan and Ivan joined him on stage and wished him well.

A crisis down production manager welcomed, housemate Bianca Gonzalez. She cried when a video message from her brother, TV host JC Gonzalez, who was in the US, was played.

The host applauded of the celebrity housemates was Alex Prieto, who brought the house down with slurdin' dance number with his dad Dennis, plus Miss Ayesa, Alex Marquez, Gladys de Leon and Thea Encina.

Housemate Angela Cobra, sang her favorite song, "Wildflower" with Eddie Ks. Jerry Corcuera, his daughter, Aira, was onstage.

RK sleaze Ray Rubiko performed a hip-hop and rap number

OPENING TODAY

I Will Always Love You

Stars: Richard Gutierrez, Angel Locsin, Amy Austria, Joan Gervin
Directed by Mac Alejandre

Regal's love for supernatural, Gutierrez and looks, play star-crossed lovers in this pro-video

One offering (let's brush and flatter), don't superordinate? See Jenny The pair trades their characters as "different and more mature." To their last romantic outing, the GMA-7 hit "Let the Love Begin," he was poor and she was rich. Okay. Here, they elope to San Francisco where the spoiled boy

Spielberg

The daughter of 11 Israeli athletes at the 1972 Munich Olympics serves as jump-off point for this political thriller. A clandestine Israeli squadron was unleashed to retaliate—murdering 11 Palestinians suspected of planning the Munich massacre. "The film examines the effects of the sensitive response on the leader and his team. Roger Ebert of the Chicago Sun-Times calls it "an act of courage and conscience.... It's not taking sides, for Israel only makes "Glorious Bastards" Ulysses Siapno

The New World

Stars: Colin Farrell, Christopher Plummer, Christian Bale, Q'Orianka Kilcher
Screenplay: Terrence Malick

The filmmaker behind "Badlands," "Days of Heaven" and "The Thin Red Line" makes his fourth film in 31 years by revisiting 17th-century North America and recounting the clash between the English settlers and the indigenous Algonquin tribes. Since it's a pre-Valentine presentation, the 135-minute epic also touches on the "unlikely romance" between John Smith (Farrell) and the chieftain's favorite daughter (Kilcher). Originally 150 minutes long, the studio-lopped off 20 minutes, but the DVD version will reportedly be three hours! Previously told by Disney in the bowdlerized version, "Pocahontas," Malick's version is getting hit by a rule. Ty Burr of the Boston Globe raves: "It's epic lyrical delirium ... half natural, gorgeous, maddening, puzzling, ultimately transcendent."

Michael Phillips of the Chicago Tribune: "Lovely, strange, like ... A few of people will be driven crazy; others will be seduced. Born unappointed, Barrymore's again."

Fun with Dick and Jane

Stars: Jim Carrey, Tea Leoni, Alec Baldwin, Angie Harmon
Directed by Dean Parisot

This remake of the 1977 George Segal-Jane Fonda movie follows a nouveau poor couple's initial descent to crime. After losing his job in an Enron-like scandal, the husband overhears his wife to snatch "big business" a house (in reporting as grand larceny. Wesley Morris of the Boston Globe thinks the new version is "more devilish, turning its targets with reckless glee ... [it] plugs in to the popular intolerance, cynicism and entitlement around the world's mega-corporations." Ray Allen Bonzalez of the Chicago Tribune complains that it got "much somewhere between social satire and slapstick."

Firewall

Stars: Harrison Ford, Virginia Madsen, Paul Bettany, Robert Patrick
Directed by Richard Loncraine

A look-security specialist's family is taken hostage and he is forced by the kidnappers to steal $100 million from his own bank's security system. The scenarios expect two early years to remind the criminals and uses his wife and kids. Brad Stanley of Bank-Tribune dismisses it "as another bad thriller." Emanuel Levy of emanuellevy.com opines "[Ford] sees moments in the picture, peaks and troughs in each scene, and knows very skillfully how he revealed the tension."

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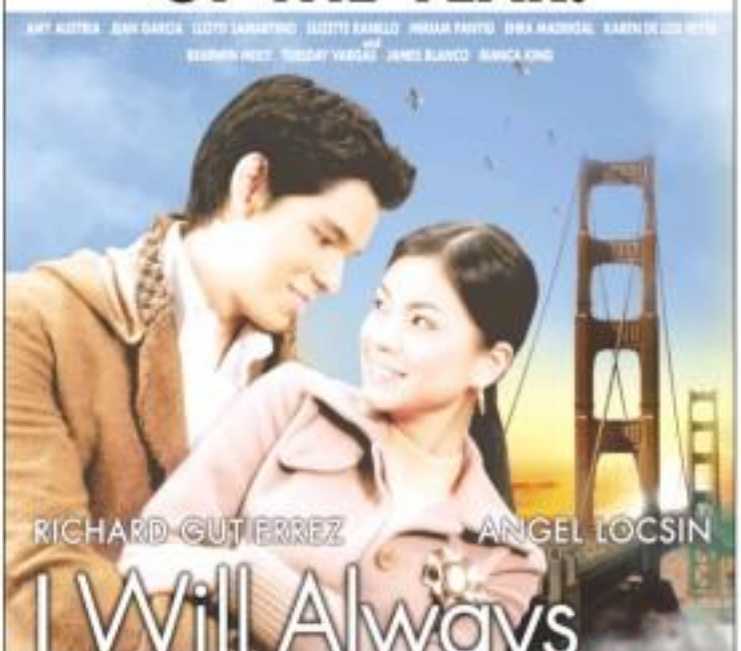
'Munich' assumes 'Schindler' mode

MATINEE: Kassovitz and Eric Bana

Review

Spielberg's latest is light years removed from 'E.T.'

THE VALENTINE MOVIE OF THE YEAR!



I Will Always Love You

a film by MAC C. ALEJANDRE

How far love has begun, can they make love last forever?

From REGAL ENTERTAINMENT, INC. and GMA NETWORK FILMS, INC.

Text ALWAYS ON to 4627 for Smart Subscribers

OPENS TODAY
OVER 100 THEATERS
NATIONWIDE

Catch the stars of I Will Always Love You inside selected theaters on Feb. 8 and 14.
Special movie memorabilia will be given away to early patrons on Feb.8 while supplies last!

MTRCB RATING-GP

Betrayal!

Some Jews already are branding "Munich" a betrayal of Israel for its depiction of Israeli assassins hunting the perpetrators of bloodthirsty terrorism.

Certainly, there is enough sympathy, as well as condemnation, to go around for virtually all of Spielberg's characters, both and less.

And there is a degree of bloodthirstiness to the Israelis' demand for retribution, as there was bloodthirstiness to Americans' desire for Osama bin Laden's head on a pike after the Sept. 11 attacks. They're only human, as Spielberg makes admirably clear, and a sense of righteous vengeance is in our blood.

"Munich" opens in frantic docudrama style, mixing vintage news coverage with Spielberg's re-creation of members of the Palestinian terror group Black September infiltrate the Olympic Village, beginning a homage standoff that would result in the deaths of 11 Israelis.

Israel responds from behind closed doors, tapping intelligence officer Avner (Eric Bana) to lead

Dr. Phil after 'Oprah'

PALEO OPRAH WINFREY FEST ENDED featuring psychologist Dr. Phil McGraw on her popular talk show, he made a vivid impression on viewers, because he sold it like it was.

Unlike other medical experts who guest on TV, he didn't spout scientific jargon and gobbledygook, but made easy to make his points in lay-men's terms.

Unsophisticated viewers warmed up to him because he could be as brusque and rude. He believed strongly in individual right to be emotionally happy and psychologically whole, and lashed out at people who violated others in this regard.

Even more tellingly, he criticized the victims, for allowing themselves to be exploited and mistreated.

Dr. Phil's guest stints on "Oprah" became more regular, and his viewers base increased. He now has his own show, but even before, when Oprah herself questioned him about how to deal with the cases he ought to the show for analysis and resolution.

The combination of no-nonsense Phil and warm, empowering Oprah proved to be unbeatable, and both of them benefited from their unique modern. The outings of "Oprah" resumed up, and Dr. Phil became a TV star in his own right.

The only thing he lacked was a TV show of his own. That's why it came as no surprise when he was tapped to host his own program, and three hacks was appearing regularly on "Oprah."

How to by Phil having his own show, more on TV? He recently found out, when are caught his show on the new Sirius Arenas cable channel.

He was as rough and no-nonsense as ever, but an viewer unless disappointed to see that his hearing style was a bit on the heavy and brutalizes side.

On "Oprah," he was quick with the singing statement or return, but on his own, he's less dynamic. He has yet to get the knack of keeping a show going, and not allowing it to get bogged down by so many irrelevant details or detours.

And, without Oprah's warm, TV-savvy touch, Dr. Phil's own show looks like ... words. Viewers still get a lot from his telecasts, but they aren't nearly as affecting and as much fun as when Oprah was throwing him the TV ropes.

'Yours, Mine & Ours'

HUNKS Quaid and Bryan Baran co-star in the sitcom comedy, "Yours, Mine & Ours." They play former high school sweethearts who meet again after many years, as single parents of their respective broods of many kids.

Despite the obvious problems involved, they tie the knot. As expected, they don't have an easy time of it, as their very different parenting styles lead to major clashes. But, it's all in good fun, of course, and a happy ending is assured.

'Casanova'

HUH? Ledger plays the ultimate lover in "Casanova" and Sienna Miller is an alluring Venetian beauty who eventually hooks him at his own game.

Through a series of clever disguises and wiles, he manages to get close to her. But he's playing the most dangerous game he's ever encountered...one that will risk not only his reputation, but also the last chance at true passion.

VIEWFINDER

Nestor U. Torre

All the movies you want to see on the big screen
NOW SHOWING at the four Greens of Trinoma

Starmall
3: Bloodrayne
4: I Will Always Love You
5: Sun with Dick & Jane

Metropolis
1: Tahlia
2: I will Always Love You
3: Fun with Dick & Jane
4: Underworld 2

Everyday Family Day at Starmall!

From hotel ...

From page A3-1

with donkey bluely. Rico was visibly shaken when the new housemate, Rosanna Roces, with whom he said he had a previous understanding, was introduced.

Shalet Montalbo, front man of the indie reggae band Junior Kiko, dressed the audience only in a kikilatod in the Visayas, especially Iloilo. Bailey topped 'sang Orange and Lemons' "Pinoy Ako" in Waray, sprinkling his act with comedy by pulling host Toni Gonzaga into a dance routine that required him to hold her personal the entire.

A fashion show heralded the arrival of fashion designer Mitch Dalisay, who is also the vocalist of the all-girl band "Death by Tampon" and "If Divo is a Diva."

Another fashion show welcomed fiancé model Zanjoe Marudo, who spoke by phone patch with his father Jonathan, a chef in New Jersey. The six-foot hunk sways each for

Triple gold medal AIA Gomez answer Gershon. Mahdad was next introduced to the crowd, estimated at 15,000 by ABS-CBN head of security Benz Lopez.

Rosanna Roces could barely control her tears when stand-up comics Chokoleit and John Lapus verbalized — and choke hands her goodbye.

For removing celeb Simone Pelilla, facing the huge crowd at the Bayanihan was a poignant reminder of his once much-envied stardom. "Yes," Simone said, "I'm ready to fall in love to ride the house."

For the last time before she's locked up inside the PBB house, Alyck Siweck held her feisty Cat to Morales, who assured her that he would be waiting. Their palpitant farewell was one of the highlights of the four-hour show that ended only after the housemates boarded a float that took them to the PBB house in Quezon City.

Residing "home," the housemates found a stripped of sofas and pillows—it was initially designed like a middle-income dwelling—and furnished with bamboo benches, and instead of beds with mattresses, there are now papag. Cuz the bodot and bang (straw mats).

How long will they last?

ARANETA CENTER

Gateway | Gateway 2 | Gateway 10

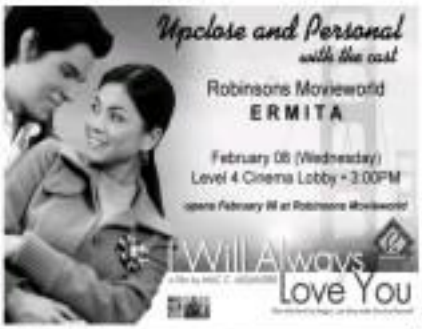
NEW WORLD | FUN WITH DICK & JANE | FIREWALL
I WILL ALWAYS LOVE YOU | MUNICH | WAKE THE LIVE | FIREWALL
UNDERWORLD 2 | CHARLIE AND THE CHOCOLATE FACTORY | DERAILED | SAW 2

Gateway Cinema

Gateway Mall Cinemas
1 I WILL ALWAYS LOVE YOU
2 FIREWALL
3 NEW WORLD
4 BLOODRAYNE
5 FUN WITH DICK & JANE

ARANETA COLISEUM
PHA FIESTA CONFERENCE
FOREVER AFTER - REGINE & OGIE IN CONCERT

Distributed by Buena Vista International Star Columbia Pictures



PC BUYER'S GUIDE
The No.1 Computer Magazine in the Philippines

WHAT'S INSIDE

Cocktales: Bally, Binay and ballots

Peso still on rally mode, hits 51.65

BUSINESS

Editor Raul G. Marcelo
Assistant Editor Corrie S. Marlowe

Forex reserves hit all-time high of $20.5B

End-January level boosted by gov't bond flotations

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE PHILIPPINES' gross international reserves breached the $20-billion mark for the first time in history to hit a record $20.5 billion as of end-January, shored by the government's fresh foray into the global bond market.

Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas Governor Amando Tetangco Jr. yesterday announced that the end-January GIR represented a 18.6-percent increase from the $17.3 billion posted in end-December 2005.

"The new record high GIR level was attributed mainly to the deposits by the national government of its proceeds from the 10-year Global Bond and Euro Bond as well as the Bangko Sentral's income from investments abroad," Tetangco said.

Taking advantage of improving conditions among foreign investors, the national government raised $2.1 billion from fresh global bond offerings last month.

"These inflows were, however, partly offset by payments of maturing foreign exchange obligations of the national government and the BSP," Tetangco said.

For that year, the BSP was originally expecting a GIR build-up of $1.5 billion.

Tetangco said the fresh external borrowings that supported the GIR last month would be used to cover the government's foreign exchange requirements this year. But he assured that the BSP would continue to keep a comfortable level of external reserves.

The GIR, which is the BSP's gross foreign currency holdings, [illegible] is a key indicator of a country's ability to service external obligations like importation and debt servicing.

"The current GIR is adequate as cover about 4.3 months' worth of imports of goods and payments of and services," Tetangco said.

"This level is also equivalent to 3.3 times the country's short-term debt based on original maturity and 1.8 times based on residual maturity," Tetangco said.

Short-term debt based on residual maturity refers to outstanding external debt with original maturity of one year or less plus principal payments on medium- and long-term loans of the public and private sectors falling due within the next 12 months.

Meanwhile, the net interna-

FOREX, B6

NOW IS THE BEST TIME TO DRIVE HOME A 2006 VOLVO. NEW PRICES WILL APPLY TO ALL MODELS BY 16 FEB 2006.

MYTH #1
AREN'T ALL CARS AS SAFE AS A VOLVO THESE DAYS?

Sadly, no. Although — strange as it might sound — we're tried to make sure they are. For example, when Volvo invented the three point seat belt in 1959 we decided not to patent it so all manufacturers could use it — and save even more lives. (we did the same thing when we invented the catalytic converter in 1976, incidentally. No patent.)

Because when it comes to safety, we're utterly committed to going the extra mile. That's why we build all our cars to safety standards that go far beyond the EURO NCAP star system. No wonder that Folksam, a Swedish crash testing agency, has used data from real-life accidents to calculate that Volvo models are at least 30% safer than the average car. And in the annual Consumers Association safety tests, our whole range consistently beats many cars with a five-star EURO NCAP rating.

The same commitment drives our investment in our multi-million pound Safety Centre in Gothenburg, which has investigated over 10,000 real life accidents involving Volvo cars and used their findings to make our cars even safer.

And because we believe computer simulations tell only half the story, we also conduct over 200 full-scale collisions each year, based on what researchers discover on the roads.

We then use this information to create unique safety enhancements, from increasing the size of our crumple zones to help protect pedestrians to WHIPS, a Whiplash Protection System proven to reduce the risk of long-term whiplash injury.

MYTH #2
A VOLVO'S NATURAL HABITAT IS THE SLOW LANE

Or at the very most, the middle lane. But put your foot down in a Volvo these days and you'll find that myth disappears as fast as the cars in your rear-view mirror.

After all, Volvo was winning British Touring Car Championships when the competition was still sitting on their dads' shoulders in the stands. And we've carried that love of flat-out thrills into our production cars.

Take the Volvo S60 T5, for example. Available for test drives at Volvo dealerships – but in 2002, the very same car broke 18 land-speed records in 24 hours at Millbrook (including racking up an average speed of 139.1mph). Which makes it the only production car to hold such a record. It packs a mighty 2401bp under the bonnet and 350Nm of torque, yet balanced by an array of performance-enhancing technology designed to keep your car on the road and smile on your face. Slow? Sluggish? Sorry, we've got to put our foot down on that one.

MYTH #3
OK, BUT AREN'T VOLVO FANS IN THE MINORITY?

Ah, you'd be surprised. In the past few years, it's been Volvo that's been getting the motoring press hot under the collar, not the marques you'd expect. In the words of an international motoring correspondent, 'these day Volvos are cool cars to be seen in'.

Even certain, more notoriously hard to please motoring journalists have been bowled over – 'it must be the sheer brutality of the thing that made it head and shoulders above our favorites. Influenced by the strong kick in the solar plexus, we truly felt that if power and excitement is what you want, this is what you need.'

So if you've ever felt inexplicable feelings of attraction towards a Volvo, take heart. You're not alone. Now why not see where [illegible] longing [illegible]

MYTH #4
VOLVO CARS ARE SLEEK AND STYLISH.

OK, NOW THIS MYTH IS TRUE AND WE TOTALLY AGREE.

Take a look at our current car range and we're sure you'll agree we're definitely sexy and curvy – fluid lines, seductive curves, elegant profiles – you'll find them all over our 2006 range.

But don't take our word for it. The best way to really see how far we've come is to get behind the wheel yourself. So if you like what you read so far – the best is yet to come.

2006 VOLVO S60 T5

IT'S TIME YOU DRIVE A VOLVO

Drive the 2006 Volvo S60 T5 and listen through your old perception of what a luxury sedan can do – with 280 bhp, Anti-Lock Braking System (ABS), Electronic Brake Distribution (EBD), Dynamic Stability and Traction Control (DSTC), what you have is the ultimate luxury sports sedan that drives as fast as you think and thrills as fast as you drive. When convention is slowing you down – break through.

To know more of the S60's features fast, book your test drive now:

VOLVO ORTIGAS
VOLVO MAKATI
VOLVO CEBU

Globe posts '05 net income of ₱10.3B

Strong Q4 performance indicates strong recovery from previous quarters' showing

SENATE
Pasay City

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The Senate of the Philippines invites all duly licensed and interested bidders to apply for eligibility and to submit bids as mentioned for the following and pertaining to "Renovation of the Senate" and "Construction of Fence Extension":

DESCRIPTION	QTY.	PROJECT ALLOCATION	ABC (MAXIMUM FEASIBILITY)
PROJECT 1 - LANDSCAPING OF THE SENATE:			
a. Lot 1 - Old Senate Session Hall (Original Site)	300 sets		
b. Lot 2 - Old Senate Session Hall (Annex)	200 sets		
c. Lot 3 - Old Senate Session Hall (Complex Site)	200 sets		
d. Lot 4 - Old Senate Session Hall (Complex Site)	200 sets		
e. Lot 5 - Old Senate Session Hall (Complex Site)	200 sets	Php 2,000,000.00	Php 200,000
PROJECT 2 - LANDSCAPING OF THE SENATE:			
a. Lot 1 - 2nd Regular Session - 11th Congress (1st Set)	300 sets		
b. Lot 2 - 2nd Regular Session - 11th Congress (2nd Set)	200 sets		
c. Lot 3 - 2nd Regular Session - 12th Congress (1st Set)	200 sets		
d. Lot 4 - 2nd Regular Session - 12th Congress (2nd Set)	200 sets		
e. Lot 5 - 2nd Regular Session - 13th Congress (1st Set)	200 sets	Php 1,000,000.00	Php 100,000
PROJECT 3 - LANDSCAPING OF THE SENATE:			
a. Lot 1 - 3rd Regular Session - 11th Congress (1st Set)	300 sets		
b. Lot 2 - 3rd Regular Session - 11th Congress (2nd Set)	200 sets		
c. Lot 3 - 3rd Regular Session - 12th Congress (1st Set)	200 sets		
d. Lot 4 - 3rd Regular Session - 12th Congress (2nd Set)	200 sets	Php 1,000,000.00	Php 100,000
e. Lot 5 - 3rd Regular Session - 13th Congress (1st Set)	200 sets		
PROJECT 4 - LANDSCAPING OF THE SENATE:			
a. Lot 1 - 1st Regular Session - 14th Congress (1st Set)	300 sets		
b. Lot 2 - 1st Regular Session - 14th Congress (2nd Set)	200 sets		
c. Lot 3 - 1st Regular Session - 14th Congress (1st Set)	200 sets		
d. Lot 4 - 1st Regular Session - 14th Congress (2nd Set)	200 sets	Php 800,000.00	Php 80,000

The specifications and the availability of interested bidders/suppliers for the Bids Specification Manual (Bid Spec) are available at the Procurement Office, Senate Blue Ribbon Annex, Pasay City from **1:00 PM to 5:00 PM, Monday to Friday** starting February 7, 2005 up to February 21, 2005 at a non-refundable fee of Five Thousand Pesos (₱5,000.00) each, payable to the Senate of the Philippines. Bidders may also download the Bid Spec from the Senate website (www.senate.gov.ph) and pay the fee upon submission of their bids.

Pre-bidding conference shall be held on February 21, 2005, 10:00 AM at the Office of the Deputy Secretary for Administrative and Financial Services, 5th Flr. Bac-Hai Hotel, Senate of the Philippines, GSIS Building, Roxas Boulevard, Pasay City.

All participants attached to the eligibility and bidding shall strictly be governed by the provisions of R.A. 9184 Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR) and other pertinent documents.

LATE BIDS SHALL NOT BE ACCEPTED.

This invitation is also published with the Government Electronic Procurement System (G-EPS) in accordance with the Implementing Rules and Regulations of R.A. 9184 (Government Procurement Reform Act).

The Senate reserves the right to reject any and all bids, declare a failure of bidding or not award the contract without incurring any liability, and to waive any defect therein to best serve the interest of the Senate.

Further, the Senate reserves the right to reject any bid which is not accompanied by all the required documents or any bid which is found to be incomplete, not responsive or erroneous.

ACCORDINGLY, IT IS THE INTENTION OF THE SENATE TO AWARD THE CONTRACT TO THE BIDDER WHOSE BID IS DETERMINED TO BE THE LOWEST CALCULATED AND RESPONSIVE BID, AND ACCEPT THE OFFER MOST ADVANTAGEOUS TO THE GOVERNMENT AND THE RIGHT TO COMPENSATE THE BID BOND (BIDDER'S PROPOSED APPROPRIATE AMOUNT) IN CASE THE LOWEST AWARDED BIDDER REFUSE TO ACCEPT THE AWARD.

EXCEPT BY THE SENATE OF THE PHILIPPINES RESERVES THE RIGHT TO REJECT ANY OR ALL BIDS AND TO ACCEPT THE BID WHICH IT DEEMS TO BE MOST ADVANTAGEOUS TO THE GOVERNMENT AND TO WAIVE ANY DEFECT THEREIN.

(Sgd.) VITT. ANNO, JOSE D. SARAO
Chairman, Bids and Awards Committee

GLOBE TELECOM INC. REGISTERED a 42-percent rise in profit in the fourth quarter last year to P3.9 billion from P2.4 billion in the same quarter in 2004.

Its full-year net income, however, dropped by 9.7 percent to P10.3 billion from year-ago's P11.3 billion due to higher expenses and income tax payments.

The fourth quarter figure was 34 percent better than the P2.2 billion recorded in the third quarter last year.

The improvement in the last quarter of 2005 indicated a continuing recovery for the joint venture of Ayala Corp. and Singapore Telecom from a decline in profit in the second quarter and a flat growth in the following quarter.

Globe's board of directors yesterday declared its first semi-annual cash dividend this year amounting to P28 per share payable to common stockholders of record as of Feb. 21, 2006. The company will pay P2.6 billion in dividends on March 31.

"Despite the increasing competitive climate in the telecommunications industry, the robust fourth quarter results are consistent to the success of various initiatives to provide value offerings to our subscribers," Globe president Gerardo Ablaza said in a statement.

He said the company sees modest growth opportunities for Globe after it received last year a permit to operate third generation or 3G mobile services and to expand its fixed line network nationwide.

"We see this momentum continuing throughout 2006," he said.

Ablaza credited the company's innovative deals for boosting revenue in the fourth quarter. Promos launched in the second half of 2005—the Globe Prepaid GoSURFER and 1M Text Swing for heavy cell users, Globe Text Nine-Swap and TM Trade-Text for heavy SMS users, and Budget 830 rates for international long distance callers—increased volume and revenue.

He said the 1.8-terabyte bit every second of toll launched in December was expected to increase voice calls.

Globe said service revenue grew 8 percent to 35.6 billion quarter-on-quarter and by 4 percent for the full year to P98.9 billion. Revenue rose despite a slight drop in its subscriber base due to a clean-up of non-earning customers in the second half of last year.

Globe and Isaac Mobile subscribers stood at 12.6 million in mid-2005, down slightly from 13.0 million in mid-2004. Of the total, Isaac Mobile accounted for 2.1 million customers.

Earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation and amortization declined by 3 percent to P32 billion last year. Operating expenses, including subsidies, went up by 16 percent, said Globe.

URC to raise ₱12.4B from offering

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

FOOD AND BEVERAGE FIRM URC, owned Robina Gotyu-Ki (URC) public offering, which was expected to raise P12.4 billion for the company, generated strong investor interest, analysts in the company said.

A company official told the business that the strong demand for URC's offering prompted the company to exercise a "greenshoe option" or to issue additional URC shares equivalent to 15 percent of the original size of the offer.

Of the 730 million shares offered, the official said 95 percent was earmarked for foreign investors while the remaining 5 percent was set aside for Filipino investors.

The offer price was set at P17 per share, the company told the Philippine Stock Exchange.

Analysts said URC's final price is an attractive alternative to other Philippine food and beverage stocks that are trading at price-earning multiples of over 20 times.

URC closed at P18.50 on Feb. 8, a day before the trading of its shares was suspended by the local bourse.

URC requested the PSE to halt the trading of its shares from Feb.7 to Feb.14 to avoid possible price distortions while the price setting process was going on. The listing of the additional URC shares is slated for Feb. 14.

Investors said that with this offering, URC's public float would swell to 35 percent of its total holdings from less than 10 percent.

Analysts estimated that URC's market capital will also increase to P700 million after its share offer.

URC's share offer trails that of First Gen Corp. which, according to its bookrunners, was fully subscribed by local investors.

Investors also said that URC's multi-year firm, JG Summit Holdings Corp., and its affiliates would trim their stake in URC to around 59 percent from 69 percent after the share offer.

Analysts estimated that the JG Summit Group—which includes JG Summit Holdings, Express Holdings and Solaiman Supermarket—would raise around P7 billion from the sale of secondary shares plus a greenshoe option.

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Family Business Roundtable

Ateneo de Manila University
John Gokongwei School of Management

CHANGING HANDS:

A 2-DAY SUCCESSION PLANNING WORKSHOP FOR FOUNDERS OF FAMILY BUSINESSES AND THEIR SUCCESSORS

LEARN FROM NOTED AUTHOR, PROFESSOR, AND CONSULTANT DENNIS JAFFE AS HE SHARES 35 YEARS' WORTH OF INSIGHTS AND EXPERIENCE IN FAMILY BUSINESS MANAGEMENT AND SUCCESSION PLANNING AT THIS UNIQUE WORKSHOP DESIGNED FOR THE PRESENT AND FUTURE LEADERS OF YOUR BUSINESS.

A unique two-part approach in dealing with family business issues.

Just how does one ensure the continued success of the family business across generations? Into whose hands should you entrust your business? How do you get your parents to begin succession planning? The answers to these questions are critical to the long-term success of any family business. Take advantage of Dr. Dennis Jaffe's presence in Manila and hear his insights into these important questions at **Changing Hands**, a unique, two-fold, two-day seminar/workshop that will address the sensitive issues of succession planning from the point of view of both founders and successors.

Dennis Jaffe, Ph.D.
Dr. Jaffe received his BA in Philosophy, MA in Management, and Ph.D. in sociology, all from Stanford University. He has been helping family businesses to deal with generational transitions, create effective management teams, design family retreats, and build healthy relationships for the past 25 years. His education, researches and consultation in the areas of family business and family wealth management, he serves on the boards of professional family business organizations, and has authored two books dealing with family businesses and their issues.

DAY 1 REACTORS

Dr. Emma Lee-Chua
Associate Professor, Ateneo de Manila; author, and family business consultant

Roberto Ongpin
Chairman & CEO
Benton Group of Companies

Antonio Hechanova
Managing Head of Corporate Finance & Family Business Consulting
Development Bank of the Philippines

DAY 2 REACTORS

Dr. Ricardo Reyes
Professor/Consultant, Ateneo de Manila and Reyes, Tacandong & Co.

Mrs. Josefina Gothong Yap
Vice Chairman
Yaptinchay Group

Participants will be given the opportunity to share their own experiences, react to the seminar inputs, and learn from each other at facilitated workshops.

Each session is designed to stand alone, but participants are encouraged to attend both sessions for maximum benefit. Don't just work on the issues important to you. Hear about the issues that might be important to the person on the other side of the generational gap. Real results can be achieved when both founder and successor attend the entire workshop.

Join us at this time of life and family business workshop. **Changing Hands** promises to clear the air for family businesses. Listen to, learn from, and interact with Dennis Jaffe and other family business owners so that together you can strengthen your family enterprises — on the road to greater success.

Seminar Fee
Early Bird Rate (up to dates indicated)
DAY 1: Php 3,150
DAY 2: Php 3,150
BOTH DAYS: Php 5,400
Regular Rate:
DAY 1: Php 3,500
DAY 2: Php 3,500
BOTH DAYS: Php 6,000
Group Rate:
Register 4 and get 1 additional slot Free!

For inquiries and reservations, call 849-6911

BCD•PINPOINT

John Gokongwei School of Management Building, Ateneo de Manila University
February 17 & 18, Friday and Saturday, 8am – 4pm

Toyota sees car sales slowing down in '06

By Bernie V. Dumlao

LEADING LOCAL VEHICLE BRAND Toyota Motor Philippines Corp. expects sales to grow at a slower rate of 3 percent this year, considering the 136,000 units...

...impact on prices of the new excise tax added last year.

TMPC's assessment was in line with the industry projection and outlook as the Chamber of Automotive Manufacturers of the...

PASSUBUBRAN NG MGA NAGLILINGKOD SA PAMAHALAAN
GOVERNMENT SERVICE INSURANCE SYSTEM

INVITATION TO SUBMIT THE BEST OFFER
(BLOCK SALE OF EQUITABLE PCIBANK SHARES)

The Government Service Insurance System (GSIS) intends to dispose of in a block sale its holdings of 96,915,000 Equitable-PCI Bank common shares, equivalent to 12.4% of the Bank's outstanding capital stock, at a minimum cash offer of P52.00 per share.

Offers to purchase should be accompanied by a cashier's or manager's check equivalent to ten (10%) percent of the total offered price and should be submitted not later than March 6, 2006 at 2:00 pm at the following address:

MS. LEAH ALICIA B. RAMOS
Vice President
Investment Office
Level 3, Core D, GSIS Building
Roxas Boulevard, Pasay City

Interested parties should comply with the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) rules and regulations on ownership restrictions in banks, and all other applicable laws, rules and regulations.

The GSIS reserves the right to reject any or all offers and to cancel the process, to waive any required formality therein, or to accept such offers as may be advantageous to the GSIS without giving any reason therefor and without incurring any liability to the affected offerors. Further, the offeror shall be liable for any and all costs incurred in its participation and the GSIS assumes no obligation whatsoever to compensate or indemnify the offerors or any of its agents, for expenses or losses that may be incurred in participating in the undertaking.

For more information, contact Ms. Ramos at telephone numbers 834-2449 and 981-0181 local 4041.

(Original Signed)
EMELITA J. TAMICO
Executive Vice President
Finance Sector

PLDT drop drags stocks

SHARES DECLINED FOR A SECOND session Tuesday, weighed down by losses in Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. after it was downgraded by broker Morgan Stanley.

The benchmark 30-company **Philippine Stock Exchange Index** fell 33.71 points, or 1.7 percent, to 2,097.38, after shedding 0.3 percent Monday.

PLDT was the most actively traded stock with a loss of 3 percent to P1,750 on heavy volume of 918,400 shares traded.

Traders cursed the sell call in PLDT as a Morgan Stanley report downgrading the stock to an "equal-weight" from an "overweight" rating, after enjoying a strong rally during the past two years.

The report said that while the fundamentals of the country's largest telecommunications group by subscribers and assets remain sound, its upside is now limited by slowing mobile phone growth, competition posed by voice-over-Internet protocol, and the potential 4 percent to 5 percent earnings dilution arising from the conversion of preferred shares into common stocks between this year and next. AP

Victorias cash flow hit P1B in Aug. 2005

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

VICTORIAS MILLING CO., THE COUNTRY'S biggest sugar refiner, said its cash flow fell P1 billion at the end of its fiscal year ending August 2005.

VMC chair Omar Wee said following the company's stockholders' meeting yesterday that it was the first time that the company's cash flow hit that level in four years.

Wee attributed the surge in cash flow to the spike in sugar prices late year to a record high of P1,200 per 50-kilo bag.

Also said: VMC has enough cash to settle P750-P800 million in principal debt payments, plus interest charges in 2005.

This year, it needs to pay P560 million in interest charges.

VMC still has about P6 billion in outstanding debt that it incurred following a massive expansion program in the early 1990s into non-sugar related businesses.

Its finances floundered as most of these non-sugar ventures failed due to local and foreign competition, and the currency crisis of 1997 made it more difficult for the company to pay off its dollar-denominated loans.

In 1998, VMC posted a net loss of P243 million. By 1999, at the height of the Asian financial crisis, VMC reported a P12.6-billion net loss.

This forced the company to seek debt relief from the Securities and Exchange Commission and embark on a restructuring program to revive its profitability and pay its debts in the next 10-15 years.

VMC suspended its debt payments to creditors in 1997.

In 2003, VMC entered into a debt restructuring agreement with creditors, which led to the conversion of P1.1 billion in outstanding loans into shares in the sugar miller.

Banks ended up owning 70 percent of VMC.

In 2003, SMC.com a new investee in Tanduay Holdings Inc. of tycoon Lucio Tan, which infused P500 million in fresh cash to help revive the firm.

PHILIPPINE DEPOSIT INSURANCE CORPORATION

NOTICE TO THE DEPOSITORS OF THE CLOSED RURAL BANK OF 21ST CENTURY (BALAGTAS), INC.

1. Pursuant to Monetary Board Resolution No. 79 dated January 19, 2005 ordering the closure of the Rural Bank of 21st Century (Balagtas), Inc. (RBC), the Philippine Deposit Insurance Corporation (PDIC) will start its operations for the servicing of claims for insured deposits in the closed RBC on Wednesday, January 26, 2005.

2. Depositors are requested to proceed directly to the following payout area where they can file their claims with the PDIC representatives during office hours (8:00 AM to 5:00 PM, from Monday to Friday, except holidays.

RBC Official's post	Payout Site Address	Duration of Valid Operations
Balagtas Municipal Hall	Brgy. Poblacion, Balagtas, Bulacan	Jan. 26, 2005 to Feb. 1, 2005
Bulacan Branch	Brgy. Mojon, Malolos, Bulacan	Jan. 26, 2005 to Feb. 1, 2005
Bulacan Branch	Brgy. Dakila, Guiguinto, Bulacan	Jan. 26, 2005 to Feb. 1, 2005
Meycauayan Branch	Sta. Rita, Meycauayan, Bulacan	Jan. 26, 2005 to Feb. 10, 2005

After the said date, all depositors can file their claims personally at the PDIC Claims Courtesy, 6th Floor, SSS Bldg., Ayala Avenue corner V.A. Rufino St., Makati City from Monday to Friday, 8:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M. or by mail to:

The Manager
Claims Processing Department
Philippine Deposit Insurance Corporation
5/6/7 Citibank Center
8741 Paseo de Roxas
1231 Makati City

3. Depositors are advised to present the following requirements to the PDIC representatives when filing their claims:
   a. Original evidence of deposit such as Savings Passbook, Certificate of Time Deposit, or Bank Statement including Unused Checks.
   b. Two (2) latest valid identification cards/documents (IDs) with depositor's signature.

Other documents may be required by the PDIC representatives in the course of their processing of claims filed.

4. Pursuant to the provision of R.A. 3591, as amended by R.A. 9302, the last day for filing claims for insured deposits in the closed Rural Bank of 21st Century (Balagtas), Inc., is on January 21, 2006. After January 21, 2006, PDIC, as receiver, shall no longer accept any claim for insured deposits maintained with the said closed bank.

PHILIPPINE DEPOSIT INSURANCE CORPORATION

Forex reserves . . .

From page B1

tional reserves including revaluation of reserve assets and reserve-related liabilities, increased to $19.86 billion in January, 12.5 percent higher than the end-December level of $17.66 billion.

Aside from proceeds generated from foreign borrowings, the government expects the **external position to remain strong this year** on the back of robust inflows from foreign investments, **remittances** and overseas Filipino workers remittances.

During an economic briefing yesterday government economic managers projected that some $10 billion would flow in the country this year from the exports of goods and services.

Export earnings are seen to grow by 10 percent from last year's level.

The government also expects a 15-percent expansion in exports of services led by information, communication and technology sectors such as back-office operations, contact centers, medical transcription services, animation services and software development.

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Toyota sees . . .

From page B1

Philippines Inc. said the increased SRP and corporate income tax associated before the sales growth rate of 18.2 percent posted in 2005.

However, Toyota's dealership is most pronounced as it reported a growth of 31.6 percent or some 20,300 units in 2005 from about 29,000 in 2004.

"SRPC has sold (since the industry "triple crown" for selling the most vehicles in the passenger car, commercial vehicle and overall categories.

Also, company outgoing president Nobuharu Takata said the local Toyota group expected earnings from the export of parts and components to reach $450 million this year, or an increase of about 15.1 percent from the $391 million posted in 2004.

Takata said the growth in earnings was due to the continuing success of Toyota's IMV (innovative multipurpose vehicle) program for which PMPC invested a total of P7.1 billion in plant expansion and modernization of its production facilities.

Bally, Binay and ballots

AN OCCASIONAL JAB OF BALLY ENDS was enough to lift the spirits of Jejomar Binay during his Jamaica trips last spring days.

Not anymore.

From footwear supernational, the former Makati lawyer has turned into a Rolex friend. All pretty easy since he became the undisguised patronizer of Makati, pleasing the rich tax paleurge from the Ayala district near the city's yoyo-rich urban poor pockets.

This week and last, the diminutive mayor again had the opportunity to turn up his nose against the chattering class and the Makati investors opposed to him with the inauguration of seven public works projects around president city.

The most visible is the P196 million Makati Central Urban Station at the end of Ayala Avenue, across from the Ayala Museum and Ayala Land's dusitango condos. Less visible are the swimming pools, computer-equipped schools, drainage network, ceramic roads and pocket parks, that have been built in his fifth district.

Not content with the limited yellow-suits of former mayor Jejomar Binay that he also flaunts among the recipients, Binay last week also doubled the birthday gifts, to P5,000, that City Hall usually hands out among the city's senior citizens.

Makati estimates that the city has about 40,000 senior citizens, count doubled as of those 60 years of age.

At a conservative six family members for every senior citizen, that easily translates to 276,000 additional voters.

Makati's hotel baronlet

ANOTHER boutique hotel has risen on the fringe of the Ayala commercial district.

The 16-room Roman Suites across the New World Restaurant on Perea Road has enjoyed almost daily full bookings since it quietly opened a month ago. Its boyish owner-host is PI_650 night attendant-cum-office.

On a larger scale, as if sensing the tightening of room supply, Ayala Land Holdings has just announced that it is converting its 402-room hotel, A. Soriano residences, beside Makati's red light district, into a high-density condotel.

A project of the Lat? family, A. Veloso is a 20-story condo whose buyers of the 350 units out of studios to 3-bedroomers are being enticed to join the planned hotel venture on an 60-30 revenue sharing basis.

Lawyers out

MALCOLM LAWYER James Jimio and his partner Santiago Velez have been retained by the Supreme Court to retain more than P17 million in interest fees that was collected from their client.

The Supreme Court found "unconscionable" the 6% percent contingent fee that the two lawyers charged in helping the Estate negotiantly collect the proceeds of the forfeiture of property in Antipolo that the National Housing Authority expropriated from the landed family in the early '80s.

Even with the reduced fees, Jimio and Velez would end up with almost P7 million, or almost 12.82 percent return for their legal services. Jimio has since been elected as a director of the Philippine Veterans Bank.

Money-go-round

• GELLNEMDOWN sentiens have written to me less than Jaime Augusto Zobel de Ayala and his Singaporean counterpart in Singtel in their fight to channel Ice Globe relay career in their path, preparatory to a court suit just like what the Disneyesque Village homeowners' association has resorted to, also against Globe.

• Exchange greenfield lawyer Gaia S. Santos has abruptly resigned her corporate secretary position in various Tuchengen companies as they use her Indian decent.

Heard through the grapevine

FORMER intelligence chief Victor Corpus, now an occasional Pentagon lecturer, is trying to break through the Mafia-dominated garbage disposal business in New York City with his patented entertainment friendly approach.

(Email: avokados.palaphilo@aol.or.com; info_pdi@yahoo.com)

COCKTALES

Victor C. Agustin

Consumer prices rose 6.7% in January

By Philstar's V. Reyes

CONSUMER PRICES ROSE BY 6.7 percent in January from a year ago as the appreciation of the peso against the dollar helped temper inflationary pressures triggered by the lingering high crude oil costs.

The January inflation rate was slightly higher than the 6.4 percent recorded in December, but reflected a significant deceleration from the 8.6 percent recorded in January 2005. It was also at the low end of the government's forecast of between 6.7 and 7.5 percent.

On a month-on-month basis, consumer prices were higher by 0.1 percent, compared with the 0.6 percent recorded in December.

According to a report by the National Statistics Office (NSO), the 6.7 percent inflation in January was pushed by the increase in prices of services and miscellaneous items.

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Editor Cesar D. Manguerra

MOTORING

COTY UPDATE

6 subcompacts, 5 pickups face off

By Tessa R. Salazar
tSpeak Avg. motormars.com

SIX MINI CARS (ALSO known as subcompacts) and five pickups were brought last weekend to the "proving grounds" at Forest Hills in Antipolo to compete in their respective categories, and maybe soon be judged as the Philippines' Car of the Year for 2006.

Defending category champ Toyota Vios was challenged by the Honda Jazz and City, new hopefuls Kia Picanto, Hyundai Getz GL and Mazda 2DH, General Motors' Aveo, which was unavailable at the time, will "move on to another" as the "makeup automobile" (article, 25 and 26).

In the pickup category, 2005 winner Ford Ranger showed off its capabilities against the Isuzu D-Max, Mitsubishi Strada, Toyota Hilux and Nissan Frontier.

With the subcompact and pickup fanfare, the over 60 motoring journalists from the Philippines—comprising the Car Journals Group Inc.—had just concluded the third event of a scheduled two-month test-line involving pushing the 77 eying cars on their gauges and entering "hollow" based on the vehicles' actual measured performances and the journalists' "feel" of the drive.

The private track at Forest Hills has been described as having a "grand combination" of sharp straights, sweeping curves and tight corners, with varied elevation changes and steep inclines—perfect for stretching the subject cars' capabilities.

Concluded tactfest

The first weekend of the road has held Jan. 14 and 15 saw the dust-off of event, part two each in the Ford Fiesta 1.4 Duratec, Honda Jazz 1.5 Sport, Mitsubishi Lancer MX Limited, Mazda 3 (2 liter), Mazda 3 1.6 6-drive and newcomer Hyundai Accent CRDI.

Girls Opera and Nissan's Sentra, which were unable to join that weekend, will join the makeup sessions on Feb. 28.

The second weekend (Jan. 21 and 22) saw the showdown of multipurpose vehicles: Mitsubishi Adventure Longway winner for AUVs in 2005), Mitsubishi Grandis, Isuzu Crosswind, Toyota Innova, Chrysler's Town and Country and Hyundai Tucson.

The tests run last weekend—on Feb. 11 and 12—will see Cory P at its busiest yet, with more than a dozen cars vying for three categories such as the execu-tive, luxury and ultra luxury cars. The weekend of Feb. 18 and 19 will have three categories for SUVs—entry level, luxury and ultra luxury.

The winning vehicles will be announced at the Autocar's Tour in Makati City on March 29. The 2nd Car of the Year Philippines is supported by Bridgestone, the Manila North Tollways Corp., the Manila Motor Show, Standard Insurance and Federal Express Corp., a company supporting road safety advocacy Lets Roll Philippines.

THE WINNING vehicles will be unveiled at the Manila Motor Show on April 6 to 9 at the World Trade Center.

PHOTOS BY JOSEPH DE LEON

Everything you wanted in a wagon

AMONG ALL THE CAR MANUFACTURERS in the Philippines, General Motors is the one with a track record of marketing station wagons. Five came the Suzuki Esteem, then the Opel Club Wagon, launched by the Chevrolet (actually it's rebadged Opel) Optra estate—which became a major success of a multipurpose vehicle, being a seven-seater.

Having pulled the Esteem, Opel and Zafira out of the market, GM Philippines imported the Chevrolet Optra Wagon from Thailand last month. With the Optra's Pinguin, GMPh presents a sedan-like that is populated by a few, high-ex-priced European competitors. There are only three other five-seater wagons belonged to premium: the Volvo V50 (P1,295,000), Peugeot 307SW (P1,550,000) and Mercedes-Benz B-Class (P1,950,000)—all prices quoted before the 2-percent VAT increase).

Expanded version

Just as the Volvo V50 is the wagon version of the Volvo S40 mini-luxury compact sedan and the Peugeot 307SW that of the 307 premium hatchback, the Optra Wagon is the wagon-ized, family-friendly version of the Optra compact sedan. It is 90 mm longer, 1 mm wider and 55 mm higher than the sedan.

The slightly bigger dimensions offer larger and more flexible cargo room than the sedan. Even after all, every luggage space is what station wagons provide better than their sedan counterparts. When the 60/40 split-folding rear seat backrest of the Optra Wagon is pushed down, the Optra Wagon can be recommended lengthwise with two to spare.

Like the sedan, the Optra Wagon was designed by Philadelphia, the fabled Detroit-based design studio. Others have noted the wagon are a common story, a cargo net, a Blaupunkt 5-disc in-dash CD chang-er/tuner/cassette player with six speakers, glass-printed antenna and steering wheel-mounted audio remote controls. All of which are also found in the 1.6-liter 12 Optra sedan except for the tonneau cover and no-goat.

1.6-L engine

For some reason, GMPh decided to equip the wagon with the sedan's 1.6-liter engine, not the 2.0 powerplant that produces 121 PS/5,800 rpm and 180 Nm/4,000 rpm max torque. That the bigger, heavier wagon makes do with 103 PS/5,800 rpm and 150 Nm/4,000 rpm peak torque. But hey, if you find the Optra's power satisfactory one day, the Optra Wagon is powerful enough and the Optra Wagon, with no heavy cargo in the back, will comfortably hit 140 kph.

Maybe GMPh had the coming oil prices in mind when it chose the 1.6-liter engine. After that station wagons are built not for high performance, but to carry family members and their belongings in quiet, sedan-like comfort and MPV-like spaciousness without having to guzzle with the size and weight of a van or an SUV. (I admit that the 4-cylinder DOHC 16-valve 1.6L engine has enough spunk to zip and catch the Optra Wagon in and out of city traffic.)

Quiet

What I like most about the Optra wagon, aside from its superb Blaupunkt sound system, is its refined, quiet ride. The wagon has the same front-wide Strut Suspension System as the sedan with McPherson struts, coil spring stabilizer bar and gas shock absorbers in front and Dual Link Suspension at the rear. Plus an self-turn total noise reduction system that absorbs shock and suppresses road and engine noise.

What I don't like in the dull gray interior and the practically-in-fashion gray panels. Perhaps when all prices stabilize—if they ever will—GMPh will upgrade the engine to a 1.8-or even a 2.0.

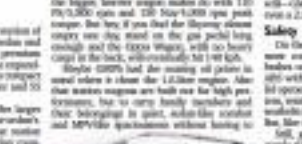
Safety

On the other hand, the Optra Wagon is at most complete in safety features with the sedan: on all four wheels, 4-channel, 4-sensor ABS with EBD, frontal airbags and curtain side airbags, engine immobilizer and security system, reinforced sedan structure and 2 pairs ISOFIX seatbelts for the drivers and front seat passengers. But, like the sedan, it has only one airbag.

Still, with its roomy interior, quiet and comfy ride, roomy cargo area, excellent stereo system and nearly complete safety equipment, the Optra Wagon at P809,000 for the manual transmission and P850,000 for the AT is a very bargain considering the price tags of the other five-seater station wagons on the market.

TODAY'S BUMPER STICKER: Make yourself at home—clean my kitchen.

E-mail comments to auwilk@inquirer.net.ph.



THE CHEVROLET Optra Wagon

One person, one car?

HOW MANY CARS DOES A SINGLE PERSON require to fulfill their everyday transportation needs in Metro Manila? Fifteen years ago, one was the magic number. A single vehicle would provide all the personal transport needs of the urban individual. This was both logical and ideal, as there is great parity in the one man/woman, one car equation. Owning two cars was a complete luxury, just something that allowed one to break the monotony of using the same vehicle day in and day out.

Then the traffic reduction schemes happened, and things have gotten a little more absurd and surreal. It seems as if the roads off for the ex-thereof congestion to be the fact that one now needs to have two cars to travel on their own, every days a week, in our little metropolis. The schedule "two cars per person" idea hardly makes any sense, but it is a reality we must live with. That's such an ironic idea to propose with contemporary society's "one car" comparisons for this day, to this age, isn't it?

Use of public transport

Alright, I'll admit that the proper solution to this preposterous but true problem should be the use of public transport. Or, is that all it'll take then, OK, thanks for the advice and everyone just get on with their lives then, screw the traffic. What a load of sweaty gumbo. The suggestion for a substantial, if not wholesale, solution is "going public" is not as clear cut as it may seem. I've had to use a lot of public transportation as of late, albeit of the taxi variety, and it has confirmed what many of us have known all along but longed to hear.

The combination of our overburdened road network, the burgeoning number of vehicles and the deterioration of the Filipino's driving habits are going to doom us into a comprehensive gridlock in a very short amount of time, by-de-gee party is to blame, as we are all guilty of adding to the vehicular congestion in some.

Asphyxiating traffic

Traffic, in fact is probably one of the most egalitarian institutions in our nation. From the library eyed bus driver, driving for fares to the jeepney driving, out-of-humor rich ka-ho-ma-ro-supplied luxury sedan—the blame for congestion crosses all sections of Philippine society. How can the answer be soothed if not treated altogether? Here are two simple solutions for augmenting the flow of our ever-suffering traffic.

One, we must institute stricter and more challenging testing for the issuance of licenses. Let's not kid ourselves, anyone can get a permit from the Philippine government to drive on our public roads, making a benevolent estimation all the more kind. The rare dunce will be those who'll say, "How can that be, Mr. Driver? I'm sure there are checks and balances that make sure only the able are granted the license to drive."

That kind of blunt rhetoric is dearly indicative of why we are in the dumb state that we are in now. I personally know one driver who learned how to read and write only after he got his driver's license, and countless others who, by the way, are not professional drivers. It's a free-for-all public music as to how he got around the written test that one takes for such licenses.

Though until now Illiterate is a skilled and intuitive wheelman, whatever innate ability he has or appears to have is somewhat tainted by the fact that he cannot, even to this day, read a complete English sentence. I really don't want to state the obvious, but isn't their something utterly wrong with this situation?

Rewarding those who follow

A general driving manner and pass-thee philosopher once said, "Why do we always focus on punishing those who don't follow instead of rewarding those who follow?" The point, less bureaucratic solution it is to encourage people to can push or share the empty seats in their nice cars cars.

Cars are our luxurious inventions and rewards, plain for anyone to see. Why is it that we've got the fact that by current, even to this day, road is a complete English sentence. I really don't want to state the obvious, but isn't their something utterly wrong with this situation?

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Isuzu retains crown; Sayonara Tabata-san

INDEED, WHEN IT COMES TO diesel-powered pickups, Isuzu appears always unbeatable. Its D-Max was No. 1 again in 2005, making the pickup champion for the second straight year.

Sales of 2,440 D-Max units in 2005 gave Isuzu a commanding 35.2 percent share of the market.

Not only did D-Max, launched in 2004, establish Isuzu's undisputed leadership in the diesel business.

Isuzu also reigned supreme in the categories of light-, medium- and heavy-duty trucks. The 4.8-liter light truck was again No. 1 in its class for the second year, a share of 48.2 percent. The 6-liter medium truck also dominated its class, earning 1,109 units for a 71.4-percent market share. Not to be outdone, Isuzu also hosted its rivals in the heavy-duty truck category, with a remarkable 73.1-percent market share.

Well, what can I say?

Congratulations to Ad Hidrosolol, Myrna Gonzales and Tommy Naval, Isuzu's Starlits. You all chose years! Quarrelsaching the Starlit Trio, of course, is Ronald "Tonee Joe" Boladed. Dessert

...

It's true. Many car buffs find the start of the EDSE implementation by buying cars in advance. Buyers feared to their "delight" the big savings they had acquired. And they were right. For one of their family believe the implementators of the new EVAT, they would have shelled out thousands more in pure EVAT fritos.

See what I mean?

The new EVAT hardly affects the wealthy.

You have the money, you can buy a car anytime—new EVAT or not. A friend of mine bought three vehicles only last month.

The government says it needed the new EVAT to generate more government earnings.

Who are they fooling?

The new EVAT punishes the poor more than the wealthy.

Who's winning the middle-class in this country can buy a vehicle with the flick of a finger?

Many of them, if not all of them, need financing loans to be able to buy their dream cars, right? I myself can't buy one all by myself. I need the loanee to get me one if I needed to get one.

Thus, with the new EVAT, I must borrow more if we car companies run more their sales targets this year. My fellow average income earners will now think twice before they buy a car. Most likely, they'd go for a house and lot, if not acquire a lot on installment basis.

...

Buyers are skittish these last, well, when we say that, it does not mean the wealthy are as affected as the middle class, not to mention our brothers and sisters living in poverty line levels.

...

BMW BLAZES. Willy Tee Yen will host friends to the BMW Blazik launch on Feb. 10 (Friday) on Aurora Avenue in Quezon City. Dubbed "Embracing the BMW Tradition," Willy Tee has given good gifts to his friends and guests to be in business sites.

...

SAYONARA. The official goodbye for Keishanen Tabata, the outgoing president of Toyota Motor Philippines Corp., is on Feb. 15. On that day, Tabata-san will turn over the reins of TMP leadership to Hiroshi Ito, who's coming in from New Zealand where he was a consultant to people against 46 million there. TMP Corp. chair, Dr. George S.K. Ty has invited his friends and Toyota supporters to the occasion. Like all the rest of the brethren, I need to be in that office, too, to say thanks for a job well done to Tabata-san. Most record of making Toyota the Triple Crown winner four years in a row during your four years of stint here is admirably remarkable. Good luck!

...

QUOTE ME. Tell me at your fellow driver or you'll be yelled at, too.

...

Comments to auto-jsc@philonline.com.

FULL TANK

Al Mendoza

Isuzu looks forward to '06 as another banner year

By Charles E. Bahar

THE 2005 SALES year was exciting time for automotive retailers and closed engine maker Isuzu Philippines Corp. (IPC) and according to its top executives, this year promises to be equally successful.

"While it is too early to know if any time soon Isuzu will make a similar sales mark this year, we're very encouraged by the fact that customer support for our products has remained firm," said IPC EVP Katsuhiko Oba. "We will see what 2006 has in store, but leading industry-wide downturn or other unforeseen developments, solid gains are predicted."

Among the significant achievements of IPC are D-Max's continued dominance in the pickup segment last year – with 2,440 units sold – gathering a 39.2 percent market share.

This marks the second consecutive year that the Isuzu pickup has led in its category since its launch in November 2003.

Topped trucks category

Oba also reported that IPC topped (and for the seventh consecutive year) the light-, medium- and heavy-duty trucks category last year when: its N-Series light trucks garnered a 68.3 percent market share after selling 888 units; F-Series medium trucks garnered a 71.9 percent market share after selling 189 units; and C&E heavy-duty trucks garnered 73.3 percent market share.

"What contributed to Isuzu's success last year was IPC's excellent product line as well as their corresponding marketing campaigns throughout the year that combined of well-timed product launches and synergic media and public activities," said IPC marketing and sales division VP Ken Takashima.

These activities included the official launch of the company's Powertrain business in August.

First time

"For the first time in the local auto industry, an automotive company has officially made available its diesel engines for industrial, marine and automotive applications, which spelled good news for the country's marine industry, operators and assemblers of propanye, and owners of bus and truck fleets," said Takashima.

Also equally helpful for the company was the relaunch of its much-improved website (www.isuzuphil.com) in November that enabled IPC to better serve its customers who would want to get company updates or check Isuzu's vehicle lineup on-line.

IPC also introduced several vehicles including the eleven-seater recreational vehicle in May (with the 4x4 version coming later in December) as well as the 2006 Crosswind multipurpose vehicle.

While the 3.0-liter diesel-powered IPC-a high-end sporty family vehicle to market in the midst of its ongoing Trooper model, the 2006 Crosswind, on the other hand, is an improvement from its predecessor with its cluster interior and exterior appointments as well as new body colors.

"Indeed, we succeeded because IPC has offered a variety of vehicle models, presented them effectively and was able to get full support of the media that helped bring our brand closer to our customers," said Oba.

POSTNOT BY BILL AMEND

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TULDOK BY RAFLAND 'BITUH' MUAMBLING

Peso still on rally mode, hits 51.65:$1

With strengthening currency, Monetary Board likely to maintain key rates

By Doris C. Dumlao and Christine O. Avendaño

THE PESO YESTERDAY GAINED some gains to close at 51.65 to the US dollar against Monday's closing of 51.600:$1.

Also, the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas' Monetary Board is likely to keep steady its key overnight rates during its next monthly policy rate setting Thursday.

Currency traders said the once-solid dollar partly contributed to the recovery and boosted the peso-dominated consolidated gloom.

The traders believe that the local currency will continue to strengthen.

BSP Governor Amando Tetangco Jr. said the overnight rates stood at "appropriate" levels for the moment.

Tetangco added that the MB would likely keep a neutral stance on its policy rate setting this week.

The BSP's overnight borrowing rate currently stood at 7.5 percent, and lending rate at 9.75 percent.

Maikathang continues to bask in the glow of a strong peso, as it shares stories who claim that the government is not doing enough for the poor in the aftermath of last weekend's mudslide outside the Philippine Arena in Bocaue City.

Peso Secretary Ignacio Bunye and government critics have resisted the remark that led to the tragedy, which left 74 people dead.

"Quite obviously they are blind to the silver lining in the horizon," Bunye said.

Bunye stressed that the strong rally of the peso against the dollar could not have happened by itself.

"It is fed by good economic fundamentals and confidence in the national leadership," he said.

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

LIFESTYLE

2bU! plays Cupid...

Win an iPod Shuffle!

Make your Valentine's date extra-romantic.

ITUNES/C-WEBB

IF YOU HAVE SOMEONE REALLY special this Valentine's day, you can skip the ink tape and give a lot both remains...an iPod loaded with songs that remind you of your loved one.

If your heart weren't in no condition to shell out enough cash for everyone's favorite music gadget, then you're in luck.

Inquirer 2bU! and Apple are giving away an iPod Shuffle...just send us a list of the Top 10 songs that remind you of the one you love.

Feel free to be as cheesy as you want. Then tell us why you deserve the iPod.

E-mail your entries along with your contact info and a photo of you and your loved one at contact2bu@inquirer.com.ph. Deadline is Feb. 10.

with this special gift and date guide that also doubles as a price catalogue.

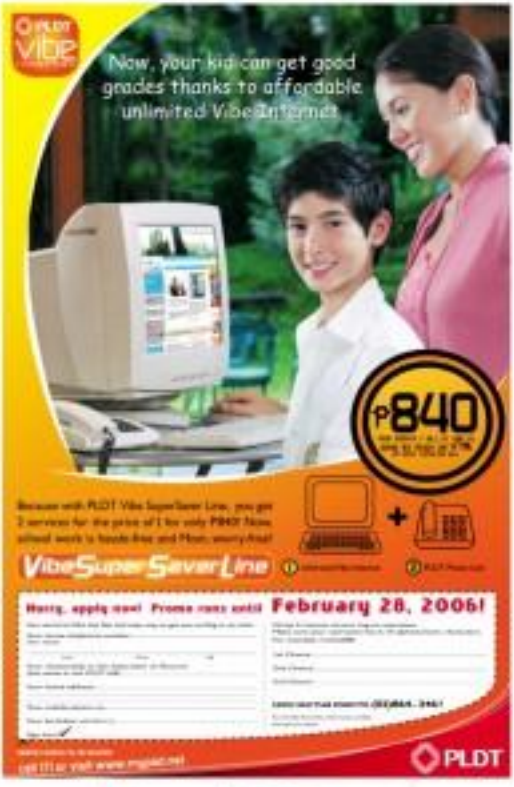
We know preparing for Valentine's Day can be a little stressful, and we want to give you a little help. We're packing this issue with great gift ideas [from stuffed toys you can design to flavored/encrusted Hennessy] and fun date suggestions [from spa treatments for two to an intimate poolside barbecue].

And because we're big fans of love, we have a special surprise for our readers this year. For the past few weeks, we've been asking you to send in your extraordinary love stories. The three couples with the most touching and unforgettable [and true, please] love stories will win everything indicated in our pages. Yes, everything. That means you'll have enough dates and gifts to last you for months.

If you want to want to win one of 2bU!'s three very special Valentine Packages, tell us your true extraordinary love story. E-mail your entries at contact2bu@inquirer.com.ph. Don't forget to include your name, age, school/ office, contact info and a picture of you and your loved one. Deadline for entries is Feb. 10.

Win a Grammy CD!

IF YOU WANT TO WIN A GRAMMY Nominee CD, tell us who wins "Record of the Year" and why you think he or she deserves the award. Simply watch the 48th Annual Grammy Awards on this World, on Feb. 8, Sun, at 9 a.m., with a primetime repeat at 9 p.m., and send your entries to contact2bu@inquirer.com.ph



Your Valentine soundtrack

MEG SWEET MUSIC THIS Valentine with "You're Beautiful," a special compilation CD as issued by Warner Music just in time for the festive season.

"You're Beautiful," named after James Blunt's hit, is a collection of 17 romantic love songs, including Ryan Cabrera's "Date," Maroon 5's "She Will Be Loved," Rob Thomas' "Lonely No More," Anjulung's "Higher than Rainbow," Didi's "Thank You," Jewel's "You Were Meant for Me" and the previously unreleased "I am Yours" by Wendy favorite Jasmine Sullivan.

The CD is a perfect item to give your loved one this Valentine's, or to play during a romantic home-cooked meal or in your car on your way to your special date.

Mail your favorite record date to get a copy.

Our three couples will receive a copy of "You're Beautiful" from Warner Music.

CHOOSE your animal. Animalcouture's signature bear Mannie Bear is the best seller, but you can also choose from flamingos and pigs in aubergine and purple frogs.

Fill clean the lamb.

STUFF your animal. As the stuffing continues, you can decide how fat or thin you want your cuddly friend to be.

SELECT a heart or a star, make a wish and place it inside your animal.

CHOOSE among pre-recorded chips or record a message for your furriness.

Cuteness overload

Text and photos by Pam Peaker

VALENTINE'S DAY is more than just plucking a bear off the shelf and wrapping it up for your loved one.

Everyone appreciates the extra personal touch. And what can be more personal than designing your own stuffed animal for your beloved?

Thanks to Animalcouture, creating the stuffed toy of your girlfriend's or boyfriend's dreams is now a possibility. And the whole process, from choosing your animal to giving it a name, takes just about 30 minutes.

And before Valentine's Day, several other stations in Animalcouture will start operating, including the Animal Salon, where you can have your cuddly friend's hair fixed or even have them fitted for wigs, and the Animal Hospital, where you can take your worn-out or broken animals for treatment. They will actually be given hospital tags and be taken away on wheelchairs. How cute is that?

The Animal Spa Clinic will also treat mats. We can actually cleanse the pristine eyes for your stuffed animal.

Based in the US, Animalcouture has stores in the UK, Australia, Puerto Rico, Mexico and now, the Philippines. Visit its Eastwood, Rockwell Power Plant or Shangri-La Plaza Mall branches for your own customized experience.

Make your own stuffed friend at Animalcouture. Animalcouture has many packages. For Function inquiries, call 5635481 or fax 6721880.

Our three lucky couples will win gift certificates from Animalcouture. The gift certificates cannot then be encashed, one outfit and a recordable chip.

FLUFF your animal. Ramona assists stuffing with the Ruffin machine.

CHOOSE from a wide variety of outfits and accessories. We wanted our lamb to become a hero.

DO visit the dressing room and dress your animal.

NAME your animal at the Birth Certificate Registry. Don't forget to fill in the important details.

MAIT for your animal's birth certificate to be printed.

TAKE home your animal to Animalcouture's special signature cradle.

Style you love

SPECIAL DATES CALL FOR the finest and most luxurious dresses from Rustmakers. A favorite at many for its classic, fun touches also offers casual and corporate wear in a wide array of colors and styles.

International DJ and model Amanda Griffin, Rustmakers's current endorser, loves the comfort and style of Rustmakers garments. Designed not when or wear this Valentine's? Check out Rust's studio or major malls nationwide to get the perfect outfit.

Our three couples will receive gift certificates from Rustmakers.

Beauty loot

IF GETTING READY FOR A DATE IS HALF the fun, then you're surely going to love the skincare Valentine's Collection. Seven well-known beauty therapy discovery kits, which contain travel-size version of High Performance Cleansing Oil, Deproo Thorapy Moisture Recovery Treatment and Deproo Therapy Moisture Recovery Cream.

Ann Chorn use Deproo's Moisture of Spring, a makeup set that includes a couture of the UV Underbase Lotion as a makeup primer and foundation, a sample of its Velvet Perfect foundation, and Image a Lipstick. Of course, the hard thing factors has on many do without the luxurious eyelash curler, too.

Any girl—your girlfriend, mom, sister, aunt, best friend...would love to get the brand's most famous offerings, and this is the best way to give them a try. Check out Ann Chorn's counters at Rustan's Tower and Rustan's Cleanway for the love gift to give to the special (dilay) woman in your life.

Our three couples will receive gift set from Ann Chorn.

Sweet treats

THERE'S NO BETTER WAY to end the night than with a cup of coffee and craftily delicious dessert. After dinner and a movie (or whatever), head to Cheesecake Inc., for a luxurious nightcap. Already a mecca for its heavenly cheesecakes, even mid-cheesecake lovers make it a point to stop by Cheesecake Inc.'s source for the sweets pastry and pastries.

Aside from specialties such as the incomparable Chocoholic series of frosted drinks, Cheesecake Inc. will be offering more treats this Valentine's. Look out for the Divine Trio option, a chocolate cake layered with raspberry mousse and covered with rich and silky chocolate ganache.

A great take-home gift is the Cheesecake Inc. gift package (five different flavors of cheesecake in heart shapes, including Mango Passion, Berries Sensation, Just for Whim Chocolate Peanuts, Lemon Berry Bliss, and Love-ly Black and White Dreamcake.)

Also, try the Good Tea and Strawberry frosted drinks, refreshing alternatives to heavy coffee drinks.

Check out Cheesecake Inc.'s Valentine offerings at their branches in The Podium, Glorietta, Greenhills, and more.

Our three couples will receive gift certificates from Cheesecake Inc.

Love in the time of the Internet

IF YOUR BOYFRIEND LIVES far away and you don't get to spend as much time together as you want, if your girlfriend is a huge Internet addict, laptops, dorm blogs and spends most of her time reading about other people's lives, if your loved one is not struggling with dorm close up a credit limit up connection, or if you remain married online, then the perfect Valentine gift might be for them to meet, practical and useful gift down to a broadband internet connection.

And broadband is no longer synonymous to expensive, thanks to PLDT myDSL.

PLDT myDSL now offers Plan 999, an affordable plan that would only set you back P999 every month.

At 384 kilobytes per second, PLDT myDSL can provide the speed you need for downloading—surfing, sending e-mail, uploading and downloading photos, maintaining your blogs and, the most important thing, keeping in touch with your loved ones through e-mail and instant messaging.

Still don't deep it, the internet has no cost boot making the world smaller and smaller, so also become an universal tool in strengthening bonds, improving communication and keeping relationships intact.

To know more about PLDT myDSL, log on to www.pldt.net, call 175 or visit your nearest PLDT Business Office for details.

Our three couples will win six months of high-speed broadband Internet access, thanks to PLDT myDSL.

More prizes for our couples!

UNILEVER will also be giving special packages filled with products from products to our lucky couples. We have it all in a bag—hair products and shampoo to protein and lotion, softener, hormone, HAT and condition care skincare.

Scent-sational perfume

EVERYONE WANTS TO SMELL good, and your significant other shouldn't be an exception.

Scents are often used to attract the opposite sex, some animals use musk to attract mates, for instance. So make sure you smell sweet for your date with your significant scent. If you don't have one, your special date is a good time to try a new one.

Girls will love the fruity floral scent of Promesse, the new perfume from Cacharel. With tangy sparkling notes of bergamot, tangerine, black berry, orchid and jasmine, the fragrance evokes all sentimental voluptuousness, very sweet and sensuous. The girl within loves it a plus.

Guys, on the other hand, will like the fresh, oriental notes of musk, woods and musks given to Ralph Lauren's Romance. The scent is described as masculine and luminous and is packaged with understated elegance.

Our three couples will receive a bottle each of Promesse and Romance from Cacharel and Ralph Lauren Fragrances from Unwat.

Can't buy me love

SEASONS YOU CAN'T guess a prize again on love. So stop wondering what to get her and start coming up with a few gift suggestions! And nothing says appreciation like a well-timed gift on the person.

Visit your favorite SM department store for more information.

Our three couples will receive P2,000 gift certificates from SM.

Give the gift of time

ALFEX watches from Time Depot

ALWAYS LATE FOR YOUR DATES? Give the gift of time with watches from Alfex. Sex only will you not have an excuse to be late; you'll look cool, too.

Time Depot stores are in Rustan's, Robinson's Place Manila, Shangri-La Plaza Mall, Festival Supermall, Eastwood City walk 2, and SM branches in North Edsa Annex, Fairview and Bacoor.

Our three couples rate Cavite watches from Time Depot.

Jewel for her feet

ICE bar heels with Swarovski-encrusted Havaianas

By Pam Pastor

IT'S HER GIRLFRIEND'S FLIP-FLOP fetish. Sorge diamonds, ice bar feet with Swarovski crystals.

Fancy meets like Brazil's shoe exclusive fashion house, Dacks, Havaianas has teamed up with Ivan Iñaki Boutique to offer a luxurious way for your girl to enjoy her favorite flip-flops in the coming summer season.

And the best part is, you can choose the flip-flops in the best sizes.

The steps are quick and easy. Choose a solid-colored pair from this season's Havaianas basic lines. Then, choose up to a dozen Swarovski crystals that would adorn the flip-flops. Only the finest rhinestones encased in silver plating will be used for these soon-to-Glamor. Then, using a special steaming device, Ivan Iñaki's staff will securely attach the crystals onto the clipped straps in your selected of patterns.

There's no time to waste. Only a limited number of pairs and crystals are available. This one-of-a-kind offer is only available at Ivan Iñaki Boutique for a limited period. Visit Ivan Iñaki at 1705 Adriatico Street, Malate, Manila or call 523-4992.

SPECIAL FLIP FLOPS FOR SPECIAL COUPLES

HAVAIANAS STEPS BACK THIS BY creating extremely special pairs of flip-flops with the purpose of presenting them to lovebirds who have embodied the brand's fashionable, fun and unique image.

Our three special Valentine couples are in luck this year because our friends from Havaianas are giving their 2006 Limited Edition line which contains two pairs of Havaianas each—one for men and one for women. Only 48 of these sets are available in the Philippines—and they are not for sale.

This year's design is inspired by two things—the metallic trend that is still going strong and the World Cup. Hence are big fans of metallic flip-flops...last year's metallic iridescent really flew off the shelves.

The prize that our winning couples will take home are no exclusive that they will not be available to mere. Wear them with pride, flip-flop lovers.

2006 Limited Edition Havaianas

PHOTOGRAPHS BY KHALIL ADIB

m&m's
CONGRATULATIONS!!!
TO THE 3 HONDA JAZZ CAR WINNERS!
jazz up your CHRISTMAS
DOROTHY JOY QUAN
Quezon City
CRIZANDRA B. CATIBOG
Batangas
LORELIE C. PANGILINAN
Manila City
10 WINNERS Sony Ericsson W800i Walkman Phones
Anabinda R. Amparo
Caroline H. Wong
Hazel Ann G. Bartolome
Jacqueline Jamias
Jennylyn Timbol
John Trinos
Jose Mario Cueto
Joy
Mary Grace Bantes
Sheilah Mate Q. Minaol
Apple iPod WINNERS
CONGRATULATIONS ALSO TO THE
1,000 LUCKY WINNERS
OF THE ODYSSEY CD.
CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL THE LUCKY WINNERS!!!

Suite Passion
specially packaged only for the romantics!
P5,500.00 ++
Holiday Inn

free!
BIG TIME
love

Café Havana

CHOCOLATE Lasagna

Bollywood Bistro Bar

Shakey's

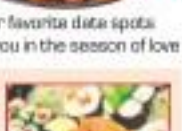
Hot date spots

Here's a rundown of some of our favorite date spots and what they have in store for you in the season of love

Solomon Guest House

Dencio's

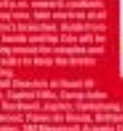
Sakae Sushi



SUSHI galore

Tia Maria's

UCC Coffee



Metro Pin

Enchanted Kingdom

Extra-cool Valentine treat

CHIPS Ceudo

DON'T EXPRESS YOUR LOVE WITH just any cake. Be extra cool and express it with ice cream cake.

Haagen Dazs' 68 Ameon ice cream cake, a heart-shaped cake which is made either by Haagen Dazs vanilla ice cream, thick strawberry cream, fresh strawberries and chocolate cookies, is a delightful way to celebrate your love this Valentine's Day. It comes in two sizes: 500 grams (Php1,695) and 1,000 g.

There are 15 other yummy ice cream cakes to choose from. Haagen Dazs gift checks are also available.

Haagen Dazs also has sweet offerings that can be enjoyed as its cafés: Crepe Gouth, Chocolate Fudge Brownie Special and Banana Split Fritters.

Visit Haagen Dazs cafés at Shoemita, Eden Shangri-La Place and Alabang Town Center and Cup shops at Greenbelt 3, Rockwell Power Plant, Eastwood Libis and Pricefriend Fort Bonifacio. For deliveries and inquiries, call 7527299.

Our three lucky couples will win Pink Cake Ice Cream vouchers from Haagen Dazs.

CELEBRITY couple Angel and Jason Francisco enjoy their spa treatment at California Nails' Magdalena branch.

Sparty for two

THE JOYOUS EXPRESSION of an Ecuadorian proverb, "Celebrating when dusted with the powder you love.

The February, California Nails & Day Spa has prepared a number of Valentine treats for couples.

Those who visit California Nails & Day Spa in One Serendy Place Greenhills can enjoy the Seven Waters manicure, pedicure and a 30-minute back massage for only P500.

If you go to their branch in Ayala Center, Makati City or Pioneer Plazapoint, you can get a free pedicure if you get an acrylic nail set.

Head over to California Nails & Day Spa in UN Manor, Roxas Triangle, Ermita, Manila, to get 10 percent off their Facial Moisture Treatment Massage and Metallic Hand or Metallic Pedicure treatment.

If you are a swimming, pedicure and gardening fan, for only P150 at their Club De Fifty Libis branch.

If you get P1,000 worth of body bonding, you can enjoy a free delicious Ace spa at their Market! Market! branch.

Call 7237777 or 8455555.

Our three couples will win free spa treatments and pedicures for the girls and free manicure for the boys.

Say it with chocolate

HAMPER

MAX Brenner's Flagon

MAX BRENNER'S chocolate bars are the ultimate indulgence for chocolate lovers.

Max Brenner's ultra-cozy bars serve chocolate in all forms, from hot chocolate to chocolate pizza.

Try the complete Valentine's Dinner (P5999+) which is available from Feb. 10-15. Enjoy the special Grapes of Mediterranean with Cinnamon, the Caesar Salad and a choice of either Pork Escalopes or Cannelloni.

The dinner will be completed by the Chocolatista, a chocolate beverage made from white chocolate and coconut milk, blended with fresh mint and a shot of espresso in five flavors.

Visit Max Brenner at the ground floor of Greenbelt 3, Ayala Center, Makati City or call 7289883.

Our three lucky couples will win gift checks from Max Brenner.

Celebrate Valentine the hotel way

By Pam Pastor

PASSIONS AT HOTEL PHILIPPINE Plaza will bring you one step closer to unabashedly Manila.

There's the Poolside Aphrodisiac Barbecue Menu, available from Feb. 10-15. Choose from vegetable kebabs, steaks, chargrilled sausages, lemon rosemary chicken, grilled prawns, lamb steak, snapper fillet or pork steak, which would be grilled especially for you.

Dine with your loved one at the most romantic spot—tables set up with a splendid view of the bay. The experience will be extra special on the 14th when the poolside is transformed into a flower palace.

The Valentine's Dinner at the Pavilion will feature four concoctions (including a 7-piece salmon set), roses and Moet & Chandon champagne so you can toast to your love.

If you and your date enjoy food, try the Valentine's Buffet Dinner at Café Plaza Inn. Enjoy sweetness of salads, both seafood, palate-pleasing appetizers, mouth-watering hot items like grilled sea bass and chicken, and luscious desserts.

You can also experience the aphrodisiac festival at Café Plaza Inn. The adventure for your palate will be available until the 28th. It

BLACK Truffle Crusted Sea Bass

SWEET RATINGS. A beautiful way to end the meal

DINNER by the bay

POOLSIDE barbecue

FLUFFY Love

PALATE pleasers

created four self-serviceable guests at Café Plaza Inn on Valentine's Day, and all diners will be gifted with dark and white chocolate pralines.

You can also go for Aphrodisiac Menu at Café Plaza Inn. This delicious meal, prepared by Executive Sous Chef Jojo Bathgate, starts with grand at 6 rounds. The meal begins with the alluring Appetizer—Pan Fried Foie Gras with Caramelized Smoked Eel, Watercress and Frisee Salad—and continues with the luscious Soup—Light Cream of Artichoke Soup with Low-Apple Confit and Pecan Crisp.

Then you can clear your palate with the Sorbet Sensation—Honey Mint and Ginseng Sorbet. The Exquisite Entrée is Black Truffle Crusted Sea Bass Fillet on a bed of Mushroom Risotto, Asparagus and Tomato Chutney and Melon Beurre Blanc. The meal ends beautifully with Sweet Sayings—Trio of Fresh Fruits with Mixed Berries Ice Cream, Chocolate Almond Cluster and Red Raspberry Puff.

Kids aren't left out either. My First Love," the hotel's Sunday Smash for kids, will feature lots of surprises including magicians, face painters, pizza, cotton candy and chocolate galore.

Hotel Philippine Plaza's Silver Anniversary is almost over, so Puppy Love is a fabulous way to spoil your loved one with memorable moments.

Dinner, and comes with a cuddly puppy stuffed toy.

If pampering is what you need, the Hotel Philippine Plaza offers many spa packages: couples can enjoy from the Gift of Sweetness and Gift of Harmony to the Gift of Caring and the Gift of Love.

Call Café Plaza Inn at 8550555 extension 3331 or the Poolside at 1555.

Our three couples will get a dinner experience romancing by the bay at the Hotel Philippine Plaza Terrace's Lanai Poolside.